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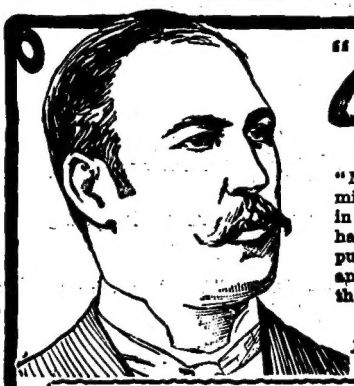

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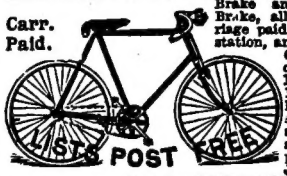


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# SHORT STORIES

No. 755.] Week Ending June 20th, 1903. [One Penny.


# THE BOND BETWEEN.

*A Romance of Real Life.*

**By BLANCHE EARDLEY.**

## PROLOGUE.

"Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The sacred words were droned in monotonous tones by a lean, apathetic curate. The church is empty save for the two principals—Margaret Heath and Vernon Grant—and the necessary witnesses. After the ceremony, the bride and bridegroom leave for Paris.

Digby Scarlett turns over his letters leisurely in the interim between breakfast and sorting a cigar.

"Ah, here's one from my friend and collaborator, the valiant Vernon. I wonder what the Paris postmark means? Any way, it can wait until I have written to ask the adorable Margaret Heath to be my wife."

This done, he opens Vernon's letter, and when he reads the news of the latter's marriage to the girl to whom he has just penned a proposal, he murmurs—

"Twice hit by the same hand, and both blows destined to die with me—to bleed internally. Not bad for a man intellectually my inferior! But the third blow *I* shall get in. My innings begins to-day." Then he leaves for Paris to join the happy couple at their invitation.

Scarlett and Grant at one time had practised copying each other's signatures, and Grant had been very successful in his imitations of that of his friend. Now Scarlett persuades him, for a bet, to sign his name to a cheque for a large amount, promising to make it all right at the bank when presented. This, however, he fails to do, and Grant is arrested and sentenced to fifteen years' penal servitude for forgery, Scarlett not even saying a word in his defence. Mrs. Grant goes to the prison to bid her husband farewell, and tells him that she will never have anything more to do with him.

## The First Chapters.

Lady Maitland is the young second wife of Sir Trevor Maitland of Maitland Manor, Melton. She captivates everyone by her extreme beauty. Sir Trevor has three children—Jack, Agnes, and Muriel—by his first wife, and an only son, Woolf, by the present Lady Maitland.

Shortly after Sir Trevor's second marriage a baby-girl is found in the Manor grounds. She is intrusted to the care of Mrs. Parkins, the lodgekeeper's wife. The name of Ivy Strange is given to the child, and at the time of our story Jack Maitland is in love with her.

Heriot North, an old friend of the family, who visits the Manor to pay his addresses to Agnes, succumbs to the charms of Sir Trevor's young wife, to the great chagrin of Agnes, who is accordingly neglected. There is nothing Lady Maitland will not do for her boy Woolf. One evening when she goes to her room to dress for dinner she finds there an ex-convict and burglar—Mike Holland—who says that he was in gaol with her first husband, and unless she pays him well to keep silence he will blazon to the world the fact that she is a bigamist.

Lady Maitland protests that her first husband is dead, but to preserve the good name of her boy she consents to pay the price, and intrusts Heriot North with the first payment, twenty pounds, which is to be left at a certain place in London for Holland to call for.

Ivy Strange refuses to become engaged to Jack until the mystery of her birth is cleared up. This her lover promises to do, and to start with interviews Mrs. Parkins. The only information he gleans from her is that on Ivy's brow—hidden under her curls—when she was a baby there was a mark like the mark of a broad arrow! Jack goes to London to consult a detective, Gilbert Chase. Afterwards at his club he meets Digby Scarlett, a celebrated explorer. Scarlett accepts Jack's invitation to accompany him to Maitland Manor.

The night of their arrival Ivy brings Lady Maitland a note, written on a dirty piece of paper. It ran as follows:

"*The man you got the laugh over is now going to laugh at you. You lied to me. I know that your first husband still lives. I 'ave seen 'im. Send or rite by return to M.H. post office, Chorlton, inclosing five 'undred pounds or will call at Manor and tell all.*"

After reading it Lady Maitland gets Ivy to write a note saying that she is sending half the money to the same place in London as she forwarded the twenty pounds.

When the girl has slipped away Lady Maitland takes the dirty piece of paper and drops it in the fire. "I only wish I could do the same with the writer," she mutters. "I see that I shall have to fight hard, but for my boy I will risk anything. Now to go and see this wonderful friend of Jack's."

With a tender smile on her lips she goes softly downstairs.

"Ah!" says her husband's voice, as she enters the room, "let me introduce Jack's friend, my dear."

The man comes forward slowly, a gleam of dazzling teeth throwing up the blackness of his moustache. Sir Trevor Maitland's wife glances up at him with a swift smile of welcome.

"This," continues Sir Trevor, "is Mr. Digby Scarlett—my wife!"


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# THE BOND BETWEEN.

## ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Recognition.

Digby Scarlett strolled thoughtfully into the village of Melton. It was a fine, bright day, the damp and fog of the last week had given way to a mild, almost humid atmosphere, and the sky overhead was clear and blue.

But it was not of the elements and their pranks that Digby Scarlett was thinking. Everything was forgotten, swamped in the baffling uncertainty of a haunting memory, that both mocked and lured him on at the same time. It was a woman's face, brilliant, haughty, and surpassingly beautiful, that blotted out every other vision. The face of the woman who had played to perfection the *rôle* of his hostess four nights ago—Sir Trevor Maitland's wife!

"Bah!" he muttered. "I must be mad to connect the two! She would not dare! Besides, when I failed to trace her at the time, I saw afterwards, in some continental paper, that she was dead—had died a year after. But this woman is marvellously like! She nearly took my breath away! I wonder whether I could satisfy myself," he mused thoughtfully. "I hate playing in the dark!"

"What! All alone, Mr. Scarlett?" said a voice behind him; and turning quickly, he saw Agnes Maitland hurrying towards him. Her sallow face was slightly flushed, and an agreeable smile parted her thin, pale lips.

He smiled grimly. This elderly, young lady did not appeal to him in the least, but he saw that he had found favour in her eyes. He had also been quick to notice that she bore no love for her beautiful step-mother. Probably she would be useful.

"Yes, Miss Maitland," he answered, "I am investigating for myself! But I might also apply the same remark to you," he added laughingly; "you appear to be alone, too!"

"I usually am," she said, the smile fading from her face, and the acid look returning to it. "But you are our guest; I am afraid you will think us very negligent."

He laughed.

"I like being alone, Miss Maitland. I am never in such good company as when my thoughts walk side by side with me! But you are different," he went on lightly. "I should have imagined that you would find your step-mother just a fellow-companion—an elder sister, in fact."

A bitter laugh broke from Agnes Maitland.

"My step-mother is my father's wife, Mr. Scarlett. I do not know her any better than I did the day she came to the Manor with him, fifteen years ago."

"Ah! She must have been a girl almost," he said thoughtfully, "while you were a child."

Agnes Maitland flushed.

"She was a widow when my father married her—a Mrs. Vernon," she said tartly.

Digby Scarlett started. His doubts did not appear so ridiculous after all!

"Really?" he said carelessly. "I must compliment Lady Maitland upon her youthful appearance! Were you going to the village, Miss Maitland?" he asked. "Because if I can do anything for you there, it will give me much pleasure. I am going to the post-office, to inquire for letters."

She hesitated.

"Thank you, but there is nothing, Mr. Scarlett. I was only going to call on an old woman in the parish, but will postpone it, as I find I may be late. You will probably meet Jack," she smiled. "If he is not at the lodge, he is generally in the village."

She turned and retraced her steps. Digby Scarlett looked after her, a queer smile on his cynical mouth.

As he was inquiring for letters at the post-office—having given that address at the club for any correspondence to be forwarded—a man came in after him, and bought some stamps, then threw a careless glance at him that changed to a look of interest, as the post-mistress said: "One letter for Mr. Digby Scarlett."

As Digby Scarlett left the post-office the man gazed after him. "That face and name seem oddly familiar!" he muttered; "especially the name. I wonder who he is, and what he is doing here."

The voice of the post-mistress roused him. "Here are your stamps, Mr. North." He took them, then left the office, and was just in time to see Digby Scarlett talking to Lady Maitland, who was driving her dogcart into the village.

After a brief pause, the jealous eyes of the man on the post-office steps saw his divinity make room for the stranger in the trap, and drive off with him in the direction of Maitland Manor.

Heriot North watched them out of sight, then walked away slowly. As he passed the "New Age Inn," a man lurched out, falling against him. With a disgusted gesture he flung him from him, then started with surprise, for the drink-sodden wretch, looking at him with bleary eyes, was the same disreputable loafer whom he had seen in the District Messenger Depôt in Regent Street, a couple of weeks ago.

"I hope that creature has not taken advantage of Lady Maitland's generosity to beg from her again," he muttered. "He must find it a lucrative business to take the trouble to come here from London for the purpose!"

In the meantime Digby Scarlett was listening to the gay, careless chatter of the radiant woman who was driving him back to the Manor.

"Well, Mr. Scarlett," she laughed. "I suppose our dull little village will bore you to death after a few days, and you will be hungering for the frivolities of town?"

"On the contrary," he replied. "I was thinking of inquiring whether there was a house to let in this neighbourhood; it is time I settled down."

The hands holding the reins trembled slightly, and a slight pucker furrowed the satin-like brow of his companion.

"I am afraid you will be disappointed," she laughed. "There were one or two small shooting-boxes to let last season, but they have been snapped up lately."

"Ah!" he murmured; "that's a pity. I was hoping to know more of the people of Melton than I do now; they interest me."

Lady Maitland did not reply. She was wondering feverishly whether this man recognised, in the polished, stately wife of the squire of Melton, the unformed girl of eighteen years ago! She thought not! She prayed not! His eyes had told her nothing a few nights before, when the name of Digby Scarlett had been a bolt from the blue of her security! His face she had not recognised; but the name—that had ever haunted her like a shadow.

"By the way," Digby Scarlett said carelessly, "I met your daughter, Agnes, a few moments ago."

"My daughter!" she exclaimed—her eyes contracting suddenly. "I have no daughter—only a son."

"I meant step-daughter, Lady Maitland," he laughed easily; "and she told me that your name, before you married Sir Trevor, was Mrs. Vernon."

"That is true," she said coldly; a strange sense of coming disaster making her feel faint.

"I wonder," the calm, well-bred voice went on, "whether you ever met a woman I once knew—*her* name was Vernon, only that was her husband's Christian name. I believe their surname was—or, rather, *is*, for they still live—Grant!"

A stifled exclamation rose to the lips of the woman holding the reins, now loosely, between frozen fingers.

"I don't remember," she said, in a low, intense voice. "My life has been so full of changes, that I forget half the people I have met."

The man by her side smiled. "I can understand your forgetting some people, Lady Maitland," he said carelessly. "By-the-way, what an extremely charming pet name your young step-daughter, Miss Muriel, calls you by. It is an abbreviation for—Margaret, I presume?"

She raised her eyes to his with a haggard desperation in them. "No, Mr. Scarlett; it is no abbreviation," she said slowly. "My Christian name is Pearl."

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Digby Scarlett's black eyes met hers with mocking deference. He had learnt what he had only suspected.

"And it is a name that suits you, Lady Maitland. Ah! Look out!" he said quickly; "you nearly had us in the ditch then!"

She laughed recklessly. "Oh, that is nothing; you will meet with more serious mishaps than that, Mr. Scarlett."

As they turned into the drive, Sir Trevor was standing at the lodge gates, speaking to Parkins. "Ah, my dear," he said. "Have you been showing our pretty county to Mr. Scarlett?"

His wife smiled. "I think we have both contributed to each other's amusements, Trevor."

"Yes, Sir Trevor," replied Scarlett, "I was fearfully disappointed to learn from Lady Maitland that there is no place to let about here. I had hoped to become one of yourselves as a neighbour."

"Why, my dear Pearl!" said Sir Trevor to his wife; "surely you forget the 'Rest' near us? That is to let, Mr. Scarlett, and it would be a very good thing if you could take it."

"I am sorry," laughed Lady Maitland carelessly; "I had forgotten the 'Rest' when I spoke to Mr. Scarlett."

When he was alone, Digby Scarlett smiled grimly. "I fancy my stay at Melton will be an eventful one! She fears me already; she knows that her secret is mine! Perhaps I may have to use my power—soon!" And his fingers stroked his moustache with the same old trick he had had when clean-shaven.

* * * * *

Lady Maitland dismissed her maid, and paced the floor of her dressing-room with long, swift steps that sank softly into the velvet pile of the carpet. Her lips were closed in a thin, scarlet line, and her eyes glittered strangely. "He knows me! He knows me!" she murmured. "I shall be unable to buy *him* off as I do the—other——! He does not need money. What then will he exact for his silence?"

She brushed the thick hair from her brow, and gazed at herself in the glass. It was a drawn, haggard face that glanced back at her—the ghost of the woman of a month ago!

"I almost wish," she murmured, "that you *had* died at the time you sent that notice to the papers! Now your life is going to be a *living* death! Unless"—she threw back her head and laughed. "But it is early days to cry 'Peccavi!' I will not give in, for his sake—the happiness and honour of my boy will spur me on to meet my enemies! He shall never learn to blush for his mother!"

She flung herself down by a chair. She did not usually pray, but her lips moved in a passion of supplication, and the refrain of her prayer was, "For his sake! For his sake! For his sake!"

## TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### The Face in the Photograph.

"ARE you going to the meet, Maitland, or will you leave me to the tender mercies of Miss Muriel again?" Digby Scarlett laughed lightly. It was the morning after his drive with Lady Maitland, and he was in a genial mood.

"Well, I may follow you afterwards," replied Sir Trevor's son and heir evasively. "I have something to do first. But Muriel will be with you," he added, "to say nothing of the mater, who is a fine rider to hounds. You were in at the death the last time you rode with us, eh, mater?"

Digby Scarlett bowed his head in the direction of Lady Maitland, who sat at the head of the table. He, being a guest, was on her right hand. "To die would be easy in such a presence!"

She laughed carelessly. "I hope we shall all parade as much pluck in our own death as we do at that of the poor fox, Mr. Scarlett!"

"The fox has nothing to complain of," he said slowly. "It has a good run, and it only has itself to blame if it 'breaks cover' too early!"

Their eyes met, and the challenge lurking in the depths of the woman's startled him. She rose from the table with a light laugh.

"The hound is a generous enemy, Mr. Scarlett, and kills quickly. It is only the higher race that stoop to torture!"

She swept out of the room with the graceful dignity for which she had become so celebrated, and Digby Scarlett sent a flash of admiration after her. "She will fight to the bitter end!" he thought, but the idea pleased him. It would add zest to the victory, to win it over a foe that dies hard!

As he rode with Muriel and Sir Trevor to the meet—Lady Maitland having pleaded a headache, and Agnes being no horsewoman—they saw Jack coming away from the lodge, and strolling along the Melton Road. He was not alone; a slight, graceful figure was beside him, and they appeared to be deep in conversation.

Sir Trevor's face clouded. "That son of mine throws up every other obligation to pursue a will o' the wisp!" he muttered. "I am sorry he has no consideration for his duties as your part host, Mr. Scarlett," and he turned apologetically to their guest, who had grown strangely quiet.

He had not forgotten the face in the likeness he had confiscated the night of the fog in London, and it had become a custom for him to look at it every night and morning before returning it to its hiding-place.

He wondered at not having heard anything of a *fiancée*, or seen the original of that bewitching fairy, and now he wondered whether the girl with Jack was the living possessor of so much beauty.

"Don't mention it, Sir Trevor," he said easily, "I was young once myself," and he smiled, grimly.

"Were you, really?" said Muriel, looking at him curiously. "Somehow, you suggest an impression of having looked through centuries, your eyes have such a world-weary expression in them, just like the Sphinx!"

"Muriel!" said her father reprovingly, but Digby Scarlett laughed, the girl's frank criticism amused him.

"Perhaps Miss Muriel is right, Sir Trevor. I am almost a veteran now, but not so old that beauty fails to touch me!"

"Ah," said Muriel proudly, "you have only dreamt of beauty, so far, Mr. Scarlett, when you see Ivy you will meet it."

"Ivy?" he said quickly. "Who is she? Your sister?"

Before she could reply, they had arrived at the meet, and soon after, conversation was dispensed with in favour of the more exciting pastime.

Two hours later, Digby Scarlett walked his horse slowly through the lanes of Melton. He had gradually let the rest of the field lose sight of him, and then quietly turned back and followed the road they had traversed earlier in the day.

As he drew near the outskirts of the wood lying behind the Manor, he gave a start of surprise, for standing in the open, yet sufficiently concealed from public view to allow of low-voiced confidences being exchanged, were two figures.

He reined in his horse and gazed curiously at them.

One was a low, vicious-looking man of the tramp species, with a cruel face and crafty, squinting eyes. But it was on his companion that Digby Scarlett gazed with wonder and startled admiration. For the face of the girl talking to the man with the evil eyes, was the original of the photograph he had so long cherished. But it was so far removed from that unflattering prototype that he almost laughed with joy when he remembered how he had looked for her to be like it.

As he gazed, drinking in the girl's unconscious beauty with thirsty eyes, his brow grew puzzled. He had, on comparing the face in the photo with one that belonged to the years that had gone, described it as possessing the beauty of the pearl, while that of the other had had the brilliancy of the diamond, and an indescribable atmosphere about her sent his thoughts speeding backwards.

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"I wonder who she is?" he muttered, "and what that blackguardly ruffian wants with her? Anyway, I mean to find out her name, somehow!"

He flung himself lightly out of the saddle, tied his horse to a tree, then stepped behind a bush where he could see and hear without being seen.

"Now then!" said the coarse voice of the man; "I've 'ad enough of excuses. What I wants I means to get, or I'll know the reason why!"

The reply of the girl barely reached the ears of the listening man, so low and quiet was her voice. "I'm sorry, that is all you can have now. But if you return to London you will have more sent to the address that the first was forwarded to. That is all I can tell you. And," she went on, in the low, monotonous tone, as though repeating a lesson she had learnt, "it is dangerous for you to stay here."

"Hallo!" thought Digby Scarlett, "I have discovered a case of blackmail. This is interesting."

The man laughed brutally. "Dangerous! Not much! I'm going to be on the spot! The secret I know is worth a bloomin' mint to me! I'll chance the rest!"

The girl clasped her hands convulsively, and the keen eyes of the man behind the bush saw tears glistening on her lashes.

"Oh, no," she murmured, "please go! I will give you all I have, if you will only leave Melton!"

"All right, miss!" he laughed. "Begin by giving me that gold bracelet on your wrist!"

She drew back quickly. "No, no, not that! I cannot part with that!"

An ugly look crossed the man's coarse mouth. "I want that, I tell yer, or——!" He caught her arm suddenly, and a low cry came from her lips.

Digby Scarlett gripped his hunting crop tightly, and his breath came from him in laboured pants.

"Stow that!" snarled the bully, "or I'll jolly soon silence you for good!"

He raised his hand quickly towards her with an oath, but it was intercepted by another hand that caught his arm from behind him in a vice-like grip, and the next moment he was flung violently aside. Then, as he turned to see who had attacked him, his collar was seized firmly, and for a few seconds the air was filled by the sharp, stinging whirr—rr—of a whip being cut quickly on to a fleshy, writhing body.

"There, you confounded scoundrel! Let that be a lesson to you not to attempt to bully a lady again, or your next dose will be a little stronger!" and, livid with rage, Digby Scarlett gave his victim a final shake, then dropped him on to the brown earth, where he lay speechless, and terrified by the sudden change matters had taken.

He rose to his feet painfully, his long upper lip was quivering with fear, and the look he threw at the girl and her protector was malignant and full of hate.

"So yer set someone on to watch me, eh, me beauty?" he said to the shrinking girl. "Then let me tell 'im the little secret we share together!"

"Shall I thrash him again?" said Scarlett, turning to her. "He deserves it!"

"Oh, no, let him go!" she murmured in a low tone. "Send him away now!"

"This lady has spared you another thrashing!" he said in a stern, cold voice. "If you don't instantly make yourself scarce, I shall follow you, and finish what I have only just begun!"

With an evil leer the man slunk off, the early November mist enveloping his figure as he stole between the thick trunks of the trees that grew more frequent as he reached the interior of the wood.

Then Digby Scarlett turned again to the girl, whose white face and strained, violet eyes told of the ordeal through which she had passed.

"I hope you are not hurt in any way?" he asked. "I am glad I happened to be riding this way."

She put out her slim, white hand with a pretty gesture.

"Oh, no! Not hurt, only frightened. I am afraid to think what would have occurred had you not come to my rescue!" And she lifted her eyes to his with an appealing gratitude that thrilled him. He was not accustomed to such glances from women.

"It was an honour to me to be of service to you," he said, but he did not think it necessary to mention that he had listened to part of her conversation.

"I am afraid these lonely woods are not safe for anyone quite so—so young and unprotected as yourself, to visit alone," he went on. "That ruffian may lurk about here again in the hope of seeing you. Will you promise me that you will take more care of yourself in the future?"

She flushed, and her eyes filled with sudden tears. "I am afraid I cannot go so far as that," she murmured; "my way lies through the woods very often."

"Then I shall constitute myself your guardian," he said lightly, and noticed that a momentary fear leapt to her eyes, and that her lips trembled.

"It is very kind of you; but I would rather you did not trouble," she replied. "I shall be quite safe in future—really!"

He smiled. "I only hope so! But I am not so sanguine as you seem to be. These woods are horrid places for such desperadoes as our late friend!"

As she walked silently by his side he asked himself curiously what secret this pure, beautiful girl with the tender eyes could possibly share with the drink-sodden tramp he had punished so summarily.

"By the way," he said, "may I know to whom I have had the honour of tendering some slight service?"

She blushed suddenly, but answered with simple dignity, "My name is Ivy Strange."

"Ivy Strange," he murmured thoughtfully; "I wonder are you related to the Stranges of Durham?"

"I think not," she said coldly, another wave of colour sweeping from brow to throat.

"I am staying at the Manor," he went on easily; "my name is Digby Scarlett."

Her eyes flashed with a sudden light. "Oh, then you are the friend of whom Jack—I mean Mr. Maitland"—she corrected herself hastily—"has spoken to me!"

He smiled. "I have that honour; you live in this neighbourhood then?" he queried. "I wonder I have not met you before at the Manor or at the dance at the Town Hall, to which all Melton went."

She blushed hotly, then raised her head with a proud gesture. "You will see me at none of these functions, Mr. Scarlett. I go up to the Manor to see my friend, Muriel Maitland, but never stay there. I am the child of the lodge-keeper of Maitland Manor."

For a moment he was taken aback. She so entirely possessed all the outward attributes of a well-born woman that the idea of her being only a child of the people after all, was a sudden extinguisher upon his hopes. But he looked at her again, and the sight of her perfect profile silhouetted against the grey background of the barren trees made him laugh at his scruples.

"Such beauty as hers is a pedigree in itself," he thought.

"I must pay the lodge a visit one day, if I may," he said; "and pay my respects to Mrs. Strange."

For a moment the girl's mouth quivered, as if with sudden laughter; but she murmured demurely, "Thank you, sir; mother will be pleased to see you."

All the time they had chatted he had walked beside her, leading his horse by the bridle, and as they reached the Manor gates Ivy Strange stopped suddenly. "This is my home," she said, with a gesture towards the lodge, "I will say 'Good afternoon,' and thank you once more for your protection. But," she went on, quickly, raising earnest eyes to his, "may I presume to ask you a great favour?"

"Certainly," he murmured, "a request from your lips will be a command."

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She smiled. "It is only to ask you not to mention at the Manor the rough man you saved me from. Sir Trevor and—and Lady Maitland may be anxious and perhaps annoyed; and as I owe them a great deal I should not like to offend them."

He bent his head. "I will obey you, you may rely on me, Miss Strange."

He watched her into the lodge, his hat in his hand, and as the door closed upon her he turned slowly to walk up the drive with his docile steed.

"*That* girl to be the child of a common lodge-keeper!" he muttered. "Incredible; yet, unfortunately, true! I understand now what vexed the old squire when he saw his son and heir philandering about with her this morning!" He shut his mouth with a savage snap, as he thought of possible love passages that might have passed between them.

Then he laughed cynically. "Bah, it's the way of all sons and heirs to amuse themselves; he is only a boy, and must marry well, for the title's sake; but I—I have no one to please but myself, and may pick my bride from the gutter if I choose. But I must find out what that low scamp was threatening her about! I won't have a mystery around the woman that I intend to make mine!"

He went to the stables, gave his horse to a groom, then entered the drawing-room in time for tea.

"Hallo, Scarlett!" said Sir Trevor; "where did you go off to? We missed you at the finish."

Digby Scarlett laughed easily. "I'm sorry I dropped out; but, to tell the truth, I felt suddenly ill, and thought it wisest to turn back in time. I had lunch on my few sandwiches in the wood, and was incidental in rendering a small service to a lovely damsel in distress!"

"Who was that, Mr. Scarlett?" said the low voice of Lady Maitland. "I did not know that Melton beauties grew in the wood."

He looked at her curiously. She was wearing her favourite colour—white, and her face was very pale, while her deep violet eyes shone brilliantly under the coronet of warm hair. He felt strangely that she was, in some indefinable way, knit to him by a tie—a tie of silence, that only he would break when he chose.

"It was a young lady," he said slowly. "A beggar was importuning her for money—I stepped in, and suggested that he should apply to the local union!"

Lady Maitland's eyes contracted with an unspoken thought, and she bit her lip with a sudden spasm. "Did you discover this modern Andromeda's name?" she said, looking at him closely through her long lashes.

He laughed. "I fancy she said it was Strange—Miss Strange," he answered.

"*Miss* Strange!" laughed Agnes Maitland, harshly; "that is an honour, Mr. Scarlett! She is usually known about here as *Ivy* Strange—the foundling from Nowhere!"

Digby Scarlett felt a wave of disgust steal over him for this hard-mouthed virago. "Then all I can say is that Miss Strange conceals the fact, and only struck me as being a gentlewoman!" he replied coldly.

"Thank you, Scarlett," said Jack Maitland, coming up with a white face and angry eyes, "you have done me a great service. Miss Strange, whom you protected from possible insult this morning, will one day be my wife, I hope!"

The two men clasped hands silently, then there was an instant's pause, and Jack Maitland strode out of the room with his friend after him.

When Digby Scarlett was dressing for dinner he laughed softly to himself. "I am afraid my impetuous young friend will not win his heart's desire. He is a nice boy; but that must not stand in the way. My little lady of the violet eyes and red-gold hair will marry me!"

He stopped with a sudden catch, and his lips paled strangely. "That cat called her a foundling from nowhere. Her face, eyes, colouring and hair, of whom did they remind me? By Jove! What a find!" He smiled grimly. "If it *should* be so—what a crowning of vengeance!"

## THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Heriot North Makes a Promise.

Heriot North rose from his lonely dinner table at "The Hollies" and looked at his watch. It was nearly nine o'clock.

"Just time for a stroll round the grounds before turning in to bed," he muttered. "I feel that I should enjoy a ramble."

He took his hat and went down the path, leaving the hall door on the latch. There were only an old man and his wife in the house, who fulfilled the duties of butler and cook respectively, and they retired at any hour they pleased after dinner had been cleared away.

Heriot North pulled at his cigar with long, thoughtful puffs, and his feet took him unconsciously in the direction of Maitland Manor, that loomed, large and imposing, before him.

Of late days he had rather avoided the Manor, until a special reminder from Sir Trevor warned him that a further absence would perhaps compromise the one creature he desired to serve. So, as he drew near, the thought struck him that he would pay an unconventional call before turning in.

"I wonder," he murmured, "why I should have been allowed to meet that woman too late! If only I had come into her life earlier, she might have cared! But now I almost wish that I had never seen her! I might then have been content to marry Agnes!" and a short, mirthless laugh burst from him as the vision of Sir Trevor's Maitland's sour, acid-looking daughter rose before him.

"No! I will live my life at the foot of a shrine," he thought. "The ideal shall never be replaced by an unsympathetic reality."

He sighed resignedly; then walked slowly on, his eyes fixed on the dim light in the lodge windows that acted as a guide to the Manor. Suddenly a sound of voices reached him. They were low, yet distinct, and appeared to come from behind a thick clump of trees that stood near the pathway. There was no moon, and the blackness was intense.

"Ah!" he muttered, "poachers or tramps! I wonder what they are up to."

He paused, and at that moment a deep, gruff voice said: "If I don't get it all by the beginning of the week, I shall throw it up, and queer yer little game! S'elp me if I don't! I bet *someone 'll* pay me well for the secret I could tell 'im!"

"Silence—you fool!" said another voice; and at the sound of it, Heriot North started violently, and the cigar fell from his nerveless fingers, for the voice was that of the one woman who occupied his thoughts both day and night. He held his breath and listened.

"I have no more money on me just now," went on the low voice, "but—" here the voice grew indistinct and only a murmur reached the ears of the man—"I must slip out, or send someone, with the money on the night of the ball at the Manor."

"Don't go trusting that girl, then!" the deeper voice replied. "She got me a lickin' last time from some cove that's after 'er!" And an oath accompanied the words.

"If I can, I will come," said the woman in a whisper, "if not, I will send her—she knows nothing. Now go!"

The voices died away in the darkness; and, after a time, Heriot North roused himself from the stupor that seemed to have fallen upon him.

That voice, the same as that which had lured him into a momentary self-betrayal! Impossible! It must be one similar in tone, and his constant musing on it had made him think every woman's voice hers! He must find out who the man was, then perhaps he could satisfy himself as to the identity of the woman who shared his secret—whatever it was.

Spurred into activity by the desire to come to the bottom

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of his suspicions, Heriot North broke into a run that led him beyond the Manor gates into the village.

Just as he was about to give up the wild-goose chase, he saw a solitary male figure loafing ahead of him that paused under the dim light of a lamp. Heriot North followed swiftly behind, his memory stirred by the suspicion of familiarity that lingered round the man.

As he came up to him, the man was turning into the "New Age Inn," and Heriot North caught a full view of his face before he disappeared between the swing doors. As he saw it in that momentary flash he fell back with an exclamation. For the man whom he had overheard speaking to a woman, and had followed from that moment, was the same objectionable creature he had seen in the Regent Street District Messenger Depôt; and again, lurching out of the inn, a few days ago, in an intoxicated condition!

* * * * *

"Ah! North, I'm glad to see you! We were wondering why you had not been near us for so long!" and Sir Trevor Maitland held out a hearty welcome to his guest.

Heriot North murmured some words of conventional greeting to his host, then his eyes sent a questioning glance round the room to encounter the eyes of the stranger he had seen in Melton Post-office some days before.

"Oh you don't know Mr. Scarlett, do you?" Sir Trevor continued; "let me introduce you. Mr. Digby Scarlett—Mr. Heriot North."

The two men exchanged a few commonplace courtesies; an instant, indefinable antagonism springing up between them.

"As you have both lived much in the East, you should have a lot in common," said Jack Maitland genially. The boy was in high form, for he had just left Ivy, whose good-night kiss still lingered on his lips.

"I am afraid that too much in common makes people bad friends, Jack!" laughed Digby Scarlett easily. He had noticed the other man's searching glance round the room, and wondered for whom it had been.

The door suddenly opened, to admit Lady Maitland.

"Ah, Mr. North!" she said, her lips parting in a sweet smile. "You are indeed a stranger!"

He took her hand in his, and flashed a puzzled inquiry into her face. She was looking radiant, in some soft, clinging, black gauze; but his glance was quick to note a rather strained look in her violet eyes, and a metallic ring in her voice.

How could he imagine that this calm, perfectly self-possessed woman was the secret conspirator of the loafer in the village public-house?

And yet some link must exist between them, for the coincidence that Lady Maitland of the Manor should send him on a charity quest to a London address for this self-same tramp, and then, that the creature should turn up in Melton and have a private meeting with the woman possessing the peculiarly sweet voice of Lady Maitland, was what would be described in a police-court as "circumstantial evidence" that some understanding existed.

All this Heriot North argued with himself, as the soft hand of Sir Trevor's wife rested in his; and yet he could not but think that there must be another woman in Melton with her ladyship's voice.

"I walked here through the wood," he said to her; "and almost imagined that I must suddenly have taken leave of my senses."

They had strolled to the other end of the room, and he had lowered his voice involuntarily.

She raised her brows. "Indeed, why?"

"Because I was mad enough to imagine that I heard you speaking to someone on the outskirts!"

She looked at him through half-closed lids that had suddenly fallen over her eyes, her pupils becoming almost like pin pricks.

"That was certainly a mad fancy, Mr. North," she said idly, fingering a long, turquoise chain with slender fingers. "But"—she cast a swift glance over her shoulder to where her husband was deep in some erudite dissertation with Digby Scarlett. "But," she continued in a low, cautious voice, "I wonder whether you will help me in something? You promised to be my friend—you know!" And a mocking smile curved her mouth.

"Indeed, I am always at your service!" he said quickly. "Tell me, is it anything to do with the ruffian I saw to-night? If he is annoying you——"

"I don't understand," she replied coldly. "You saw whom, Mr. North? And what was the man saying to the person you mistook for myself?"

He felt that he had blundered. "I—I beg your pardon," he stammered, "but I heard the man—whom I afterwards recognised in the village—threaten someone about money, and mention a secret. I am afraid, knowing of your kindness to the man, that he was worrying you for more! Let me silence him," he went on in a low voice. "I would do anything to prove my disinterested devotion to you!"

"Anything?" she smiled curiously.

"Yes, anything!" he breathed; and with that vow he sealed his soul to a bondage the chains of which would lie heavy on him all his life!

"Ah!" she laughed lightly. "Then, first of all, Mr. North, you must not imagine that it was myself whom you heard this evening. It was, unfortunately, the waif, Ivy Strange, who lives at the lodge; and I have discovered a sad secret concerning her. The man in the wood is—"

"Ah, Lady Maitland, you are discussing a subject in which I am more than interested!" And Digby Scarlett smiled pleasantly into her face.

She started suddenly. How much had this man, who knew her as no other man present did, heard of her conversation? He was dangerous; and in his presence she felt that a veritable powder-mine yawned under her feet.

"What particular portion of my conversation interests you, Mr. Scarlett?" she said coldly.

He smiled. His intuition had told him that the dark, lean man with the intense eyes and strenuous expression had more than a friendly regard for the lovely châtelaine of Maitland Manor, and his sardonic humour was tickled by the knowledge that he held the strings by which, when he chose, he would make this beautiful puppet dance to any tune he desired.

"The pretty waif—at the lodge," he replied slowly, his black eyes narrowing to a fine glinting sparkle. "Is the engagement between her and Jack to be made public yet?"

"I am not aware that any engagement exists, Mr. Scarlett, between my step-son and the girl at the lodge," Sir Trevor's wife said. "I do not fancy their mutual adoration will go any further than the usual flirtation, in spite of his heroic defence of her the other afternoon! Neither his father nor myself consider it seriously."

She rose and beckoned Heriot North to follow her. He did so silently, having moved away to Agnes' side when Digby Scarlett interrupted them.

"Trevor," said her ladyship to her husband. "I am going to my boudoir to show those miniatures to Mr. North; he is quite an authority on them, I hear."

As they passed through the doorway, Digby Scarlett laughed quietly. "Ah! she is not partial to the idea of Jack either being engaged to the waif, or having the first place as the heir! She would rather her own brat had the precedence."

Then he turned to say something to Agnes, who was standing, gazing out into the darkness. As he approached her, he was startled by the expression of her face. It was white and bitter, and her mouth had a cruel sneer on it.

"The plot thickens!" he murmured. "She is in love with North, who is ditto with the fair Lady of the Manor;

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and, in consequence, there is no love in her heart for her step-mother!"

"Well, Miss Maitland," he said aloud; "you look busy with thoughts! I wonder if they are on the same subject as my own?"

She turned startled eyes on him. "What were they, Mr. Scarlett?" she said, with a chilly smile.

He lowered his voice, and, casting a glance at the half-closed door, said carelessly: "Lady Maitland's style of beauty attracts all sorts and conditions of men. She seems to have cast a spell over your friend, Mr. Heriot North."

A dark, ugly red spread slowly over the thin, spiteful face of Sir Trevor's elder daughter. She opened her mouth as though to speak, then shut it with a sudden snap, and between her closed teeth he heard her mutter: "I hate her! I hate her!"

As he strolled away towards Jack, who had asked him to join him in a game of billiards, he smiled grimly. "So her ladyship has not won over everybody by her charming ways! I wonder what her whispered conversation was about with that chap North? The girl at the lodge was mentioned, too. That woman is playing some game, I fancy, and one that requires delicate handling! I have not begun to play yet; and I fancy my game will surprise her ladyship not a little!"

That night, before Lady Maitland retired to rest, she smiled thoughtfully at herself in the mirror. The anxious look had left her eyes, and her expression had grown again sweet and child-like.

"I am glad I told him about the accident of that girl's voice being like mine," she murmured. "The fact of my giving the man money made him think I did it for the girl's sake!" She laughed softly. "While *she* imagines that I am shielding her Jack from harm! And if I should, at any time, find the creature growing too exorbitant—I have by me someone to deal with him—someone to——"

She stopped suddenly, and going to the drawer in the dainty escritoire, unlocked it, and drew out the bright, shining toy she had taken from her husband's dressing-table some time ago.

"Yes," she murmured, handling it lightly, "I have found someone to deal with him! Someone who will tell no tales!"

As the bright light fell upon the thing in her hand, a gentle noise at the door made her turn her head quickly, and thrust her hand behind her. Then, creeping softly, she suddenly flung the door wide open.

"Who's that?" she said sharply.

The corridor was in darkness, but dying away in the distance, she heard the quick rustle of a woman's dress.

## FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Man in the Room.

"Will you allow me to congratulate you upon your engagement, Miss Strange?" And Digby Scarlett leant upon the lodge-gates, and gazed into the lovely face of the lodge-keeper's adopted daughter.

"My engagement, Mr. Scarlett?" And Ivy Strange flushed hotly as she glanced at him with startled eyes.

"Yes," he said slowly. "I hear that you are engaged to Jack Maitland!"

"No, at least, I mean——" She stopped, and her colour grew even more deep than before.

"You mean what?" he asked. "Perhaps it is a conditional engagement, depending upon his good conduct?"

She raised her head with a sudden hauteur, and he smiled as he remembered where he had noted that movement before.

"It is nothing to do with that, Mr. Scarlett," she said simply. "But we are waiting until—until he has found out something for me—something connected with the past."

"The past?" he murmured; "whose past? Yours?"

She flushed. "Yes, mine; since you have probably heard that I am only a foundling," she said bitterly.

Digby Scarlett bit his lip. If this girl and her lover discovered what he very nearly suspected, then he would lose the greater part of his revenge! He must try to prevent that if possible.

"Then," he said, leaning forward; "until that time of discovery arrives you are free?"

"Practically—yes," she murmured absently.

Digby Scarlett smiled; and when he liked, his smile was very tender.

"I am glad you have told me that—Ivy," he said, in a low, intense voice; "because it gives me some excuse to tell you that I love you; and even were you a gutter-child, I would deem it an honour to call you mine. I would seek for no parents—only you would I want. Tell me," he went on, passionately; "is it quite hopeless?"

When he had first spoken, the girl had recoiled from him in sheer amazement, and her face in the dark gloom of the late November afternoon looked strangely pale.

"Oh, Mr. Scarlett!" she said, bewildered; "you must be mad to speak to me like that! I love no one but Jack; if ever I marry, he will be my husband!"

"Don't say that," he cried. "Listen to my love, dear! I am an older man than Jack. He is only a boy, and life holds many prizes for him; but for me, Ivy, child! the world contains only your fair, sweet flower self!"

"Don't speak to me like that!" she said, shrinking from him fearfully. "You are nothing to me; never can be anything; only Jack, I love, and hope to marry some day!"

He opened the gate and came towards her, his passion carrying him beyond the bounds of prudence.

"You shall love *me!* I shall supplant that boy's image from your mind!" he said hoarsely, and seizing hold of her, he attempted to draw her to him. "Kiss me—Ivy—darling—kiss me!"

She struggled in his arms like a bird newly snared!

"Jack! Jack!" she cried faintly, then, as Digby Scarlett was about to press his lips to hers, he was suddenly and effectually silenced by a well-directed blow from a strong young fist, that laid him full length on the gravel path.

"Jack! oh, Jack!" cried the girl again; but this time her cry was of joy, not fear; for her lover had come at her call.

"Who is the man?" he said hotly. "I only saw you, my darling, and the back of the brute's head."

Digby Scarlett rose slowly, and as Jack Maitland saw his face, he fell back with a cry of amazement. "You, my guest!" he murmured. "Scarlett, why have you betrayed my trust in human nature like this?" And the pain in the boy's voice made the elder man wince.

"I am sorry this has occurred," he said speaking thickly. "I understood from Miss Strange that she was not engaged to you, and I asked her to—to marry me, thinking that she was free."

"You knew I loved her!" said Jack passionately. "You were my friend—and I confided my feelings to you; then you take advantage of my absence to try and win her from me!"

Digby Scarlett shrugged his shoulders. "When you are my age, Maitland, such terms as 'friendship' and 'honour' will play second fiddle to the object a man means to win! I fell in love with Miss Strange, and, base as it may seem, my friendship for you faded in proportion to the strength of my love for her."

He paused, and his hand went up to his brow, where a red bruise was beginning to throb.

"I offer Miss Strange my apologies for frightening her. It shall not occur again! And you"—he turned to Jack, speaking in a clear, staccato voice; "you have the satisfaction of knowing that you have knocked down a man old enough to be your father!"

Jack whispered a few words to the trembling girl beside him, who glided into the lodge, leaving the two men alone.

"I will try to forget what has happened," Jack said, in his honest,

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manly way. "The whole affair is regrettable, and I feel that perhaps I was wrong to have left her so much alone lately. I am willing—if you are—to bury the hatchet!" He put out his hand, with a grave civility foreign to his usual debonair style. After a moment's hesitation Digby Scarlett touched it with his own.

"Done, Maitland!" he cried with a harsh laugh. "I will do my best to win back the confidence there was once between us. I will go to London to-morrow—perhaps, when I return we shall all be the same."

"I hope so," said Jack quietly. Had he not been instrumental in bringing this man to his father's house, he would have cut his hand off rather than held it out in a mockery of friendship to the man who had attempted to steal his lover from him!

With a few brief platitudes they separated, and when Digby Scarlett was by himself, he turned in the direction of Maitland Manor and the lodge. "I will make you pay for this, you young hound, as I made the other pay for his blow years ago!"

With a face distorted by passion, he shook his fist at the twinkling lights of the Manor, and a rasping laugh came from his lips:

"*You* shall pay for each blow! I hold all the strings in my hand, and when I pull them the dance will begin!"

The following day a telegram came from London calling the guest of the Manor away.

"I am almost ashamed to say how long I have trespassed upon your kindness and hospitality," he said genially. "And I shall never be able to repay it."

"Oh, come, Scarlett!" laughed the Squire; "we shall see you again, I hope. You are not going to let London swallow you up?"

Lady Maitland raised her eyes and fixed them on the guest she both hated and feared, waiting for his reply.

"Hardly," he replied. "I made arrangements yesterday to take the 'Rest' on a short lease; so the next time we meet it will be as neighbours; and I hope"—he turned to his hostess—"that Lady Maitland will honour me by giving a house-warming for a lonely bachelor!"

Their eyes met in a swift challenge, but Sir Trevor's wife smiled graciously, and said: "Certainly, Mr. Scarlett, I shall be very happy to help you."

The *adieux* were made—Jack was unaccountably absent when the guest drove off—and in a few hours time, Digby Scarlett found himself once more in London.

He went to a hotel instead of the club; and the next morning took a hansom and directed the driver to an address in a fashionable part of the West End, where apartments were let in the season.

The streets were murky and full, and a shabby-looking man following the hansom was unnoticed.

Digby Scarlett dismissed the cab, then slowly went up the steps and rang the bell.

"Is your mistress in?" he asked, when a trim maid opened the door.

"Yes, sir; will you walk in?" And she showed him into a handsomely-furnished room on the first-floor.

He looked round grimly. "Luck favours me to-day. I hardly expected to find the woman here, after all these years. I shall soon find out if she is the same one. I am glad I kept the address."

"Is it for apartments you have come, sir?" said a voice behind him, and, turning, he saw the landlady—a plump, grey-headed woman, with a kindly face, wrinkled like an apple, and a dignified manner.

He bowed. "Yes; or, rather, I have ventured to call especially to ask you about a lady who stayed with you some years ago. I am—her brother, just returned from America, and wish to trace her."

The woman frowned thoughtfully. "Well, sir, I have had many ladies staying with me since I began to let the rooms these last twenty years." Digby Scarlett smiled; then it might be the same woman after all.

"Unfortunately, madam," he said, "I am afraid you will remember only too well, when I tell you that my sister's name was Mrs. 'Grant.' She was here on her honeymoon, and a very sad thing happened to her husband. Perhaps you remember now?"

"Mrs. Grant, sir," she exclaimed quickly. "Oh, that poor, young thing! I shall never forget her as long as I live! That was an awful time for her!"

He nodded his head. "It was. What I wished to ask you was, how long she stayed with you—afterwards?"

"I don't remember exactly, sir. She was very ill, poor child. When she got better she went away with her little baby and her maid."

"Ah!" Digby Scarlett murmured thoughtfully. "Did she tell you where she was going?"

The woman shook her head. "No, sir. All I know is that they went to Southampton. After that, I never heard any more."

He took up his hat. "Then I won't trespass upon your time any longer, Mrs.—er——"

"Phillpot, sir!"

"Ah!" he murmured thoughtfully. "That is all I think I need ask you. By-the-way, what was the name of the maid?"

She shook her head. "I don't remember, sir. I know Mrs. Grant depended on her a lot."

Digby Scarlett thanked her, looked at the rooms, then left, after profuse apologies for detaining her so long. As he settled back in the hansom that was taking him to his hotel, he smiled with satisfaction. "I don't fancy I need look any further for proof. I know all I want to know."

As he went into the vestibule of the hotel, he did not notice a pair of hungry, burning eyes that followed him—the eyes of the shabby man who had run all the way to West Kensington behind his hansom, and followed him back again! There was a smile of grim determination on the worn face of the man as he turned from the hotel, and disappeared into the darkness with swift feet.

Digby Scarlett spent the day after his visit to West Kensington in choosing bric-a-brac for his new home, the "Rest," and when he returned to his hotel he felt tired and played out. As he was crossing the hall to make inquiries for letters, one of the attendants stopped him:

"If you please, sir, there is a gentleman waiting to see you. I showed 'im into your sitting-room; as 'e would wait."

"Did he leave a name?"

"No, sir. 'E said you would need no introduction."

The face of the man who listened changed colour slightly, and his lip trembled as he walked slowly up the wide staircase. Then he laughed. "I must be seeing phantoms to-night! There are hundreds of men who may want to speak to me. Why should I imagine such an impossibility?"

He paused suddenly and called the man to him. "Did you notice what the gentleman was like?"

"He was quite old, sir," replied the servant; "very bright eyes, and snow-white 'air."

Digby Scarlett laughed softly, as he turned away. "One of the estate people, I suppose, come to me to sign the papers about the 'Rest.'"

He went into his bedroom—it was adjoining his sitting-room—and unlocking his bag, took out a small, steel thing, which he slipped into his pocket. "One never knows," he muttered. "It may be useful."

He went to the door of his sitting-room, and, softly turning the handle, walked in. As he did so, a figure rose from a chair, and came forward slowly.

Then Digby Scarlett's fingers touched lightly the trigger of the "thing" in his pocket.

**(Another long instalment next week.)**

Every Lady who wants . . .

**A HUSBAND**

should get a copy of this week's

***PEARSON'S WEEKLY.***

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# Letter Juggling Competition.

| CASH DOWN. FIRST PRIZE, £25. | CASH DOWN. SECOND PRIZE, £10. | CASH DOWN. THIRD PRIZE, £5. |
|---|---|---|

**TWO BILLIARD TABLES** *(measuring 4 ft. 10 inches by 2 ft. 8½ inches), together with cues, balls, marking board, and spirit level,*

*And* **TWENTY-FIVE GRAMOPHONES**, *each one fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, and accompanied by two records.*

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## WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

**Below you will find twelve sets of letters, each of which contains the name of a Railway Station in the United Kingdom (not necessarily using all the letters). You must write (in ink), in the space left for that purpose, the longest name you can make by rearranging the letters.**

**The name containing the greatest number of letters will be the correct solution. If, however, more than one such name can be made out of one set of letters, each will be counted correct.**

**All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January (1903) edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to BRADSHAW'S GUIDE, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or ROOM EIGHT, "SHORT STORIES," 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.**

**The first prize of £25 will be given to the competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £10 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in order of merit.**

**When you have filled in all the names you can find, take out this page and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in "SHORT STORIES."**

**In the event of a tie a further set (or, if necessary, several further sets) of letters will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.**

EXAMPLE:
**ABGHIIMMNR... Birmingham.**

THIRD LIST.

| | |
|---|---|
| **25. EEERTX** ..... | **31. AEGILMNNOT** ..... |
| **26. BGHINORT** ..... | **32. AEIKLLLO** ..... |
| **27. ACHINORSW** ..... | **33. ADDLLNNOU** ..... |
| **28. ACEILLRS** ..... | **34. EEFINNRSSV** ..... |
| **29. DEEFGHORR** ..... | **35. ABILRSSUY** ..... |
| **30. BDERY** ..... | **36. DEEEIMNRRW** ..... |

Name..... Address.....

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# Married in Haste.

**Telling of a Strange Match that had a Happy Ending.**

*Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.*

It was perfectly plain that there was going to be a wedding in the church of St. Simon—a large and imposing edifice in a well-known London district.

Th passers-by gathered this much from the fact that a strip of red carpet covered the steps from the church door to the pavement, and from the further fact that the clerk hovered uneasily before the main entrance to the building, quite evidently waiting for the wedding party.

Most men and all women love a wedding, therefore those who had time to spare, and no urgent business to do, took up their positions at the foot of the steps and waited patiently to obtain a glimpse of the smart folks they felt certain they would presently see.

Some of the bolder spirits even went further, and walked up the steps into the church itself, and, finding they were unmolested by the clerk, went with increased boldness up the nave and seated themselves in the pews that gaped invitingly empty for all comers.

It was strange, but no wedding guests filled any of the seats; the footsteps of these who had come into the church half afraid of their own boldness rang loudly round an empty building; and their eyes looked in vain for any of the ordinary signs of a brilliant sight.

Not a soul was to be seen, save the anxious-looking clerk, whose face seemed each moment to put on a fresh expression of care, and the curate who stood at the vestry door waiting to come forward and do his part in the ceremony.

"Oh! it's just going to be a sort of hole-in-a-corner wedding," one girl whispered to another. "I daresay the bride will simply be in her travelling dress, and not worth looking at. I wish now I hadn't come in!"

"Well! there certainly isn't going to be anything *smart*; I haven't seen a single soul who could by any stretch of imagination be called a *guest*, and—oh! my dear, who is that?" The chattering young lady broke off her sentence to end it with this abrupt question, as a strange and most incongruous figure passed through the church door and slouched slowly towards the chancel steps.

It was the figure of a man, whose downbent head and nervously twitching hands told of the shame and discomfort he was enduring. His face might once have been handsome, but want, misery—possibly even sin, had carved deep lines upon it.

His clothes were shabby to the point of raggedness; indeed, his coat was torn in many places, so that the lining showed through, and his boots were not only much the worse for wear, they were, practically, unwearable.

He wore no collar, his coat was buttoned to his chest, and a sorrier specimen of the human race could scarcely have been dreamt of than the miserable being who slouched up to the chancel steps, watched suspiciously and scornfully by the clerk, curiously by the onlookers, and with something of horror by the curate, who stepped quickly from his place and whispered a few words to the intruder.

The answer must have satisfied him, for he withdrew to the vestry door once more, but the puzzled horror on his face deepened, and he never removed his eyes from that strange, incongruous figure standing with drooping head and wretched mien beside the chancel rails.

"Who is he?" "What is he doing here?" "What *does* it mean?"

The questions buzzed to and fro amongst the congregation which, in the last few minutes, had grown imperceptibly larger. But no answer came to their questionings, and curiosity was reaching the point of fever-heat when the sound of a carriage stopping at the big west doors drew all eyes in that direction, and then only the sacredness of the building prevented the utterance of a loud exclamation of surprise from those who watched.

Of surprise—and of admiration—for, moving with stately steps across the threshold, their astonished eyes saw a tall and graceful woman, about whose shapely form fell the rich folds of a white satin gown, over whose head fell a veil of the most costly lace.

Her face was as white as the gown she wore, but its rare and exquisite beauty made those who saw it hold their breath for a second; whilst its expression of infinite sadness, of frozen horror, gave them a sudden sensation of taking part in some awful unknown catastrophe.

The bride's hand rested lightly on the arm of an old man, about whose thin lips an evil smile hovered, whose shifting, snake-like eyes shone with a baneful light—a light that became wickedly triumphant when he finally placed the beautiful woman in white by the side of the miserable, ragged form at the chancel rails, and drew back a pace himself, smiling still.

"She is going to *marry* him. He is the *bridegroom*," horrified whispers arose on every hand, and the face of the curate as he moved mechanically down from the vestry wore a look of disgusted amazement reflected on many another countenance.

The miserable bridegroom straightened himself a little as the opening words of the marriage service rang through the church, and his eyes lighted themselves deprecatingly towards the beautiful woman beside him. But no feature of her face moved, her eyes seemed fixed on vacancy; she might have have been an automaton for all the sign she gave of life or interest in the proceedings.

Her lips framed the words the clergyman bade her say, but the words themselves sounded dead and meaningless; she held out her hand to her bridegroom when she was told to do so, but it was like the hand of a dead woman.

Never once did her eyes glance in the direction of the man who was swearing to love and cherish her till Death should part them; only once did she give the slightest sign that she was a breathing, living human being.

When the ring was placed upon her finger, those nearest her could see that a long shiver ran through her from head to foot, but after that she remained like a statue until the end of the service.

To those who looked on it was the most strange, the most painful ceremony they had ever witnessed, and a breathless longing to see the *dénouement*—to know more of the why and wherefore of the extraordinary proceedings led the whole congregation to go to the church door, in order to watch the driving away of the most incongruous couple they had ever seen joined together in holy matrimony.

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If their curiosity was not satisfied, it was, at least, whetted tenfold.

Side by side the bride and bridegroom walked down the steps—side by side, but no more. Her hand did not rest upon his arm, she did not look towards him, and his head was bent downwards more shamefacedly than before.

The carriage waited beside the kerb—a carriage and pair, whose footman stood decorously holding the door open, his face expressing nothing but the absolute passivity of a well-trained servant.

The old man with the evil face, who had given the bride away, followed the newly-wedded pair down the steps, but at a discreet distance, and it was noticed that his repulsive countenance was still wreathed in smiles.

At the foot of the steps the bride paused, and a faint flush dyed the deadly whiteness of her face, as she suddenly held out her right hand towards the man so lately made her husband.

"Take this," she whispered, her words inaudible to those standing near, "I have done—as I said—take this—and let me never—see your face again."

From her hand to his something passed, and those nearest declared it was a heavy purse, and that for an instant the man had hesitated, as though intending to refuse it. Then his fingers closed over it, an extraordinary expression passed over his face—an expression whether of passionate love or bitter hate it was impossible to say.

He took one quick step towards his bride, and in a voice as low as hers had been, but vibrating with a force and passion hers had lacked, he murmured:

"You shall never see my face till I am fit to claim——"

His sentence remained unended. She drew herself away from him, and her eyes swept over his wretched figure with scathing scorn in their depths.

"Let me pass," she said slowly and clearly, and, drawing herself to her full height, she brushed past him with a superb gesture of disdain, and entered her carriage.

"Home," she said to the footman. The door was banged to, the footman sprang upon the box, the carriage drove quickly away, leaving the bridegroom and the old man with the evil face standing side by side upon the pavement.

"This is the best day's work you ever did," the old man said with a sneer; "and this would not have been done, except for me."

"Except for *you*!" The other's face grew livid, his eyes burnt fiercely. "You have ruined her life as well as mine; and, see here, I will not touch her money—not a farthing—not a halfpenny of it! She—is an angel of light—an angel of light, I tell you, and some day—some day——"

A low, mocking laugh from the old man checked his utterance. With an oath he flung the purse he held at the mocker's feet, and repeating in a low voice:

"Some day—you will see!" He broke his way through the crowd, and hurried rapidly down the street till he was lost to sight.

The old man stooped, and his laugh rang out again, as he picked up the fallen purse.

"I shall see, shall I, my noble son? A fool for your pains, as usual, Maurice Dranmore—a fool for your pains."

Then, with a shrug of the shoulders, and that snake-like smile hovering round his lips, he jumped into a waiting cab, and was driven rapidly away. The younger man wasted no time in escaping from the gaze of the gaping crowd.

* * * * * * *

In the great house which was the home of Dorothy Swayne, the heiress, there was an unusual stir and bustle; much shaking of the head, and many whisperings.

For many days rumour had been ripe that their beloved mistress was going to be married, but an atmosphere of mystery and strangeness had hung round all these rumours, and no one had been able to ascertain the exact truth upon the subject.

With the exception of a scapegrace brother, Miss Swayne had no near relations, nor anyone to call her to account for her actions; but her faithful servants had seen, with growing uneasiness, that their young mistress was in trouble—terrible, deadly trouble—and her white face and anguished eyes gave them many a heartache.

And now, at last, a climax had come.

Arrayed in bridal white, she had this morning driven away in her own carriage, accompanied by a certain Mr. Dranmore, whom, they all knew, she hated and despised, an old man who had been her father's friend, but never hers.

The whole household then was agog with excitement—an excitement but little diminished when, barely an hour after her departure, Miss Swayne returned—alone.

"Tell all the servants I wish to speak to them in the library," she said to the butler, as she swept across the hall in her trailing white draperies—her face as white as they—"bring them all there at once." And when her astonished household hastily obeyed her summons they found her standing beside the library table, stately and tall as a great white lily, her face calm and still as though carved in stone.

"I wish to tell you," she said steadily, "that I have been married this morning." All eyes stole furtively to the plain gold ring on her left hand—a gasp of intense surprise burst from all lips, "I have been married to Mr. Dranmore's son—Mr. Maurice Dranmore."

Amazement, horror, dismay chased each other over every face in the room, but the quiet voice went on: "But, excepting that I have changed my name, nothing else will be changed. I shall live here as before—alone. I have parted with—my husband on the church steps. I do not expect ever to see him again. I—married him for a reason of great importance; he is my husband in name only."

That was all! The household learnt no more, and surmise and conjecture ran riot in housekeeper's room and servants' hall.

"Why—why—why had their mistress done this thing?" That was the perpetual question.

"Why?"

On that same afternoon the newly-made wife—Dorothy Dranmore—her white robes removed and hidden away from her sight as she hoped for ever, dressed herself in the simplest of black gowns, and went out alone. Her destination was very far indeed from her own stately mansion, and the cabman who drove her thither lifted his eyebrows in surprise when she bade him stop at last before a mean house in a yet meaner street.

"Wait for me," she said, "I shall not be long;" and she passed through the open door of the building and up a flight of broken, rickety stairs.

At the very top she paused, and, drawing a long breath, knocked on the door of a room—entering it immediately.

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Beside the table in the centre sat a young man, his head buried in his hands—his white face indicative of the utmost dejection.

At the sound of the opening door he started violently and shivered from head to foot—but when he saw the tall, beautiful woman come in alone he rose quickly to his feet with the low ejaculation,

"Sis? Is it you? Why have you come to my beastly hiding-place? Why?"

She put her hand gently on his arm, and some of the frozen misery that had been in her face all day died out of it.

"I have come," she said, "to—bring you this—to tell you it is all right—that you are a free man—and safe." And as she spoke she handed to him a slip of paper.

"A free man? Safe? All right." He repeated her words heavily, the colour coming and going on his fair, weak face. "What do you mean? You were always cleverer than I, sis. You oughtn't to have had such a wretched fool for a brother."

"Hush, dear." Her voice was very gentle. "Read that paper. See—it is all right;" and she unfolded the paper she had given him, and held it before his eyes. He looked at it vacantly for a moment, then, suddenly a light leapt into his face.

"I—I can't understand!" he exclaimed brokenly, "It—it seems plain enough, but I can't understand. That's old Dranmore's writing,—but—but he's as hard as nails—they say he never forgives, and—and Dorothy I did forge his name—it's no use pretending I didn't. I forged—and—embezzled. Being his confidential clerk made it so—so jolly easy,—and the temptation was more than I could stand." He looked weakly up at his sister, and her lips quivered.

"But if you wanted money why not have come to me? My godfather gave me wealth,—and—you know, Dick,—you *know* I would have given you all you needed."

The young man hung his head.

"It—it was racing debts, sis,—gambling debts that you would have hated. I—I could not bear to let you know,—and old Dranmore gave so much into my hands that—the temptation was too much. I meant to pay him back,—but I knew he would never forgive if he once found out,—and I can't understand—this."

He indicated the paper he held, on which were written the words:

"On my most solemn word of honour I swear that I will not prosecute Richard Swayne, nor in any way attempt to punish him for forgery and embezzlement. This I swear to in recognition of Dorothy Swayne's action on my son's behalf.

"Signed, Joseph Dranmore."

"What have you done for old Dranmore's son?" Dorothy's brother looked up into her face with bewildered eyes.

"I—have married him," she said shortly.

"*Married* him? Why—his father had cast him off; he had pretty well gone to the dogs; he was—in the workhouse or something. You *can't* have married him, sis; why did you do it? Why did——"

"I did it for you," she answered gravely. "Hush—listen—try to understand, Dick. Mr. Dranmore came to tell me of what—you had done; he threatened the utmost penalty the law could inflict—and I pleaded for you in vain. Then—he is a fiend, Dick—an utter fiend—he laughed suddenly, and said he would let you off, pardon you absolutely—on one condition. If I would agree to marry his son—Maurice Dranmore—you should be free."

"Why did you not tell me? I would never have let you sacrifice yourself," the young man exclaimed indignantly.

A sorrowful look overspread his sister's face. How could she tell him that with her knowledge of his innately weak character? She had been certain that penal servitude would have meant his utter ruin.

"I—told no one," she said gently, "Mr. Dranmore stipulated that I should marry his son *as he was*, dressed in his old clothes, exactly in the miserable condition in which he seems to have been living. He sank to be a sort of cab tout I think—he looks the most utterly wretched being." Her face grew white as she remembered that it was her husband of whom she spoke, and she paused for a moment—then went on bravely.

"I was to be in ordinary bridal dress—that was part of the bond—and I was to give the man money when I had married him—but the marriage was an absolute necessity. Without that Mr. Dranmore entirely refused to forgive you. I—I have done it, Dick. I have married Maurice Dranmore. See—that is his ring upon my finger. I—am—his—wife. We parted at the church door, and God grant, oh! God grant I may never see his face again."

Her brother looked at her in speechless wonder, a gratitude that was beyond words lighting up his face.

"No—don't thank me," she said, a little sob breaking her voice. "I—did what I thought was right, and now, Dick—oh! Dick, try to make my sacrifice worth while. Be a good man and a strong one. Let me know that my action was not in vain. Make my sacrifice worth while!"

* * * * * *

Ten years had slipped away since Dorothy Swayne had, under such unwonted circumstances, married Maurice Dranmore.

The nine days' wonder of it had quickly subsided, and Dorothy's world had learnt to look upon her as a married lady—or rather perhaps as a widow.

If she had been beautiful at twenty-five, she was far more beautiful now that thirty-five summers had passed over her head, and the nobility of an unselfish life, of a self-sacrificing nature had stamped a loveliness upon her features that was far beyond mere daintiness of colouring or the beauty of form.

She still lived alone, and of her husband she had not received a single word of tidings since that strange wedding-day. Her brother—in a distant land—was living a better and manlier life than ever before, carrying out his sister's loving request and making her sacrifice worth while. Old Mr. Dranmore had died shortly after the infamous wedding he had brought about.

And now there had suddenly come to Dorothy what seemed to her the most terrible temptation, the crowning anguish of her life.

For the first time in all the years her heart had been touched, and more than touched by the homage of a man who for the last few months had been constantly at her sdie.

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"From the colonies," was vaguely said of him, but his name—Tom Smith—gave very little clue as to his identity or antecedents. Only Dorothy knew that she cared neither who nor what he was; that the sound of his footstep could set her pulses throbbing; that his deep voice would send a thrill through her heart; that the glance of his dark eyes made her instinctively lower her own.

The strength of her own feelings terrified her; but strive as she would, she could not wholly quench the love that was springing up in her own heart in answer to the love that looked out of the stranger's eyes.

"I must tell him the truth," she said to herself one evening, wringing her hands together; "he thinks I am a widow—and free; I must tell him the truth—and—break my own heart!"

Two hours later she was seated by his side in the conservatory of a house of mutual friends, and in the fragrant stillness it seemed to her that she could hear all her pulses throbbing whilst his gaze scanned her face.

"I—I have something to tell you," she said abruptly, feeling that she must speak at once and end the agony she endured. "I—I——"

"And I have something to tell *you*," he broke in quickly, "something which I have wanted to tell you for days, for weeks, for——"

"Wait, wait," she cried, springing to her feet; "you must hear me first. I ought to have spoken before; it was wrong of me. I have been letting you be my friend under false pretences,—I—am not what I seem; I am a married woman, and my husband is still alive."

She panted out the words breathlessly, then waited in a very anguish of despair for his answer, not daring to lift her eyes to his face; longing, yet dreading to hear his voice. When she heard it at last its tenderness sent a long shiver through her frame.

"And if you were free—could you have—cared for *me?*"

"Ah! don't," she exclaimed; "don't tempt me—don't *hurt* me, it——"

"*Hurt you?*" His arms went suddenly round her, she was drawn close against his breast, his kisses rained on her face. "Hurt you—my wife—my wife!"

"Oh! *don't*," she sobbed, struggling a little in his arms, but he still held her closely, whispering:

"Your husband is alive, my sweet; he is here—here—here! My name is Maurice Dranmore, not Tom Smith. When I married you—for your brother's sake, and utterly against my will—I was not worthy to kiss your feet. But your angel face, your heavenly goodness awoke what good there was in me.

"I have worked, and toiled, and struggled to be fit for you, and in all the long, long years I have thought of you—only you—and loved you more every day. And now—I have come to ask you to take me, truly and in earnest, 'till Death us do part,'—my wife!"

The face that Dorothy lifted to his was wet with tears, but what he saw there satisfied him, for a smile flashed into his eyes—"Married in haste, sweetheart," he murmured, "but with God's good help I will see to it that you do not repent at leisure."

**L. G. Moberley.**

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Hotel Clerk: "This is a bad half-crown." Commercial: "All right; I had a bad night."

There are young men who cannot hold a skein of wool for their mothers without wincing, but who will hold between eight and nine stone of a neighbouring family for the best part of the evening with a patience and docility that are certainly phenomenal.

A small landed proprietor was taking a drive with his daughter and his intended son-in-law for the purpose of showing the latter round the estate. The coachman drove at a smart pace. "John," whispered his master in his ear, "don't drive so fast, the estate will look so small."

## Your Editor Chats.

All attempts in the "Buried Stations" Competition should reach this office not later than by first post on Thursday (June 18th). Envelopes must be addressed according to the instructions given last week.

Another list of letters in the Juggled Letters Competition will be found on page 777. Competitors are asked to read the conditions carefully; this will prevent their raising unnecessary queries. No questions regarding the competition will be answered either personally or through the post, but if any point of general interest is raised it will be dealt with in this column.

A comprehensive summary of the chapters of our new serial, "The Bond Between," is published on the first page, so that new readers can start it now. I would certainly recommend anyone who has not begun to read it to do so without further delay.

Any single or widowed lady among my readers—between the ages of seventeen and seventy—who is in want of a husband, should get a copy of this week's *Pearson's Weekly*, in which she will see full particulars as to how she can win Mr. P. Doubleyou, who is being offered as a prize. The conditions are not very hard to fulfil. In addition to a husband the fortunate winner will have her wedding dress and complete trousseau provided for her by *Pearson's Weekly*, All expenses attached to the wedding itself and a month's honeymoon will also be paid. Ladies should get a copy of *Pearson's Weekly* now and see what they have to do.

I hope my readers have not overlooked my request that they should inclose some stamps for the Fresh Air Fund with their attempts in the "Buried Stations" Competition. If each competitor sends in only two or three stamps it will mean a considerable increase to the Fund. Only ninepence is required to give one child a happy day. All the expenses of management are borne equally by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd. and the Ragged School Union, and every penny of the money subscribed by readers goes in paying the expenses of the children's own outings.

Some readers may perhaps like to get up an entertainment, hold a bazaar, or do something else by which to raise money for the Fund if they cannot afford to give out of their own pockets as much as they would wish. Collecting forms will be sent on application to anyone who desires them. All amounts will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*, and should be sent to the Hon. Sec. Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to whom all communications regarding the Fund should be addressed.

**Your Editor.**

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# ASSISTING AT A HOLOCAUST.

## Telling of a Girl's Disillusionment.

"So sweet of you to come, darling," and Ada Sutton threw her arms round the neck of her friend as she stepped from the train to the platform.

"Which end is the luggage in? Here, Williams," and she beckoned the footman towards her, "see to Miss Heseltine's boxes. Come along!" and she linked her arm within that of her schoolday companion, giving her a hug as she did so.

"But how sudden it is!" began Mary Heseltine as soon as they were seated in the carriage. "When you told me of the engagement you said the marriage would not be until late in the year."

"Yes, but Jack has been called up for active service. I don't know whether that is the right expression, but at all events he has to leave for South Africa within the next few days. He asked that the marriage might take place at once. Of course I consented. My mother objected, but I won her over on the question of expense. See what it saves! Besides, it is my duty to marry him when he is going to fight for his country!"

"Oh, Ada, how heartbreaking it will be to part! However will you say 'good-bye'?" Her hand sought that of her friend and gripped it in warm sympathy.

"Yes, that will have to be faced, but see how important I shall be, having a husband at the front. Any day I may open the paper and find that he has 'saved the situation,' or got the V.C. Everyone will be coming to see me. I shall be the most important woman in Broadmere!" She rattled on light-heartedly.

"The wedding will be as quiet as quiet, but the choir will be there, the 'Wedding March' played, and that kind of thing. I shall wear a travelling costume, and the short honeymoon will be spent in town, so that he can start at a moment's notice. I shall accompany Jack round the stores while he is getting his impedimenta together. Isn't it exciting?"

Mary Heseltine looked at the bright girl who took things so lightly. She was an emotional little creature with light, fluffy hair, very affectionate, but of no depth of character. It pained her to think that she should regard so serious a matter in the light her words implied.

"Of course, you always promised that you would be my bridesmaid," she continued, "so I wrote to you at once. His sister will be the other. I don't think you will like her—I don't, she is always so grave. Jack calls me optimistic. I suppose she is pessimistic—is that the word? But I am monopolising the conversation. Have you no news, Mary? When are you going to be married?"

Mary Heseltine's face reddened with a happy, rosy blush, and the light of joy was in her eyes instantly, as she turned them on her friend with a meaning glance.

"Oh, Mary!" cried her friend excitedly. "Is it——"

She nodded quickly.

"Bless you!" exclaimed her companion. "I am so pleased. Tell me all about it. No, there is not time now, for we are nearly home, but to-night we shall have a long, long talk. Your room is next to mine. I arranged that just so that we might have a regular old school night again, like the good old times. Do you remember the little bedroom we shared at St. Fursey's?"

"And how we got impositions for sitting up late?" put in the other.

The two girls laughed merrily over their escapades. "What a lot we shall have to talk about!" they exclaimed simultaneously, as the old memories came back to them instinct with life.

"To-night, as soon as dinner is over, I will say that you look tired, then we can get to our rooms early," suggested the bride-elect. "You see, we shall have no time to-morrow, for the wedding is at eleven o'clock, and there is so much to talk about."

To this her friend readily consented.

"Then you can tell me all about your engagement. It will be so nice to talk over the fire. Here we are," she broke off, as the carriage swept through a gateway into an avenue of trees.

"Will he be here to-night?" inquired Mary Heseltine.

"He? No. He is at the barracks to-day, helping to get things ready for the start. Isn't it fortunate? There is nothing to interrupt our last evening together."

The bridesmaid smiled. She was fond of her friend, but her thoughts went to the man who had put a half hoop diamond ring on her finger but two days ago. She wondered whether she would have talked so lightly if her lover had been ordered to South Africa. She smiled at the mere suggestion, and thanked Providence that Bertie Crowhall was a civilian, and not likely to be ordered away on the eve of his wedding.

As arranged, the two girls retired early that night. Very soon after going up there was a tap at Ada's door, and her friend entered in her dressing-gown, eager to exchange confidences in regard to their respective lovers.

"What a lovely fire! Why, Ada, you will be roasted!"

"Welcome to the Holocaust!" she replied.

"A what?" inquired her friend.

"A holocaust—that is the word, I know, for I made sure by looking in the dictionary."

"Who is the victim?" she laughingly asked as she drew a chair up to the fire.

"That is yet to be disclosed. In fact, there are awful disclosures to be made, but to-night closes Act I. in my life."

By her side was a box, which she proceeded to unlock with an assumed air of mystery.

"Now we shall have a burning!" she exclaimed as she

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threw back the lid, disclosing the contents to Mary's gaze.

"We will take them in order," she began, picking up a sprig of white heather. "It has kept remarkably well. I met him in the Highlands two years ago, and he gave me that at parting. He was a nice young fellow, but too dour, as the Scottish call it, with a regular Highlander's temper.

"He proposed to me on Mount Nevis—Ben Nevis I mean—and I half accepted him. Indeed we were almost engaged, but he went abroad and—well there is no fun in being engaged to a man you never see. A man abroad is always more or less a myth—people don't believe in them. Here are some of his letters. Letters and white heather into the fire you go," and she dropped a little bundle into the flames.

"You seem to have a lot of letters in that box," remarked the other girl.

"Yes there must be some hundreds. There are some I received when I was at St. Fursey's with you and others so late as last week, but all must be burnt to-night. Do you remember Tom Ashe, the vicar's son? He gave me that little silver whistle when I was at school. We wrote stocks of letters to each other. Poor Tom, he was killed somewhere in India—Afghanistan, or I believe I should have married him. He sent me that photograph from Delhi, and those flowers from Simla."

She went on with her history, steadily dropping various keepsakes and mementoes among the glowing coals, while her friend sat and listened.

"Don't you think this is rather horrid, telling me all about these men?" said Mary Heseltine at length. "Their inmost thoughts appear to me to be in a way sacred, and some of the writers are dead."

"You wretched moralist. Are you not interested?"

"Yes, certainly, but it seems mean, somehow, to tell another of their love affairs."

"Of course, Mary. I am only telling you, besides I am destroying all clues, as they say in the penny dreadfuls. You are my confessor—we all need one at times."

"Go on then," smiled her friend.

"I believe you are impatient to tell me your affair—own up," she said, with mock sternness.

"No, my news can wait. It's not so important as all that."

"Very well, then, we will go on. Mind, I am dying to hear all about your engagement, but we must do one thing at a time, and my confession is not yet made. This little Prayer-book in silver and ivory was given to me by a former curate here. He was really a good fellow, but so awfully conscientious that I felt a great sinner in his presence. It was a dull time—just after I left school. I took up with church work. We were great friends until——"

"Don't burn the Prayer-book. It seems sacrilege," interrupted the maid of honour, putting out her hand in protest.

"Very well, if you will take it, but I cannot retain it in my possession. Tear out the flyleaf; we will at least burn that. I was saying he went off to London, and is working somewhere in the slums now. Here is the last note he ever wrote me. I am afraid I treated him badly, but he was really too good, and, foolish man, he thought I was a saint. Men are stupid where we are concerned."

She paused as she gazed into her treasure box at the mixed collection of photographs, faded flowers, locks of hair, buttons of different regiments and such like.

"I call them the broken fragments of love's dream."

"Or memorials of my flirtations," suggested Mary.

"Oh, I was really in earnest with a number of these men. I wonder why they loved me," she mused. "But you must all go the same way. It will never do to begin married life with all these in my possession. I wonder what Jack would say if he knew."

She hastily collected a number of photographs.

Suddenly her companion, who was looking over her shoulder into the box, gave a start, and with an effort suppressed a cry.

"Good Heavens, Mary! What a fright you gave me. Whatever is the matter?" asked the bride of the morrow.

"I am cold." Her lips were white, and she spoke slowly.

"Why, you are shivering; those bundles of letters are putting the fire out—they actually refuse to burn. Come nearer. I will put some more coal on. Now you will be all right with this shawl round you. That journey of yours must have been very trying."

She was so intent on the box that she did not notice the dark shadows that had come over the eyes of her friend, or that she still shivered in spite of the wrap.

Poor Mary Heseltine. The box had proved fatal to her, there being turned out for the holocaust was a package of lettersf rom the man she loved. She knew the handwriting too well to be mistaken, besides there were various pictures of his.

Her first impulse was to demand an explanation from Ada. The ink looked as fresh as if it had been written the day before, but her face was innocent of deception.

"How long is it since he was one of them?" she asked with an effort that cost her a great deal.

Still her friend did not notice the change in her voice, and answered casually. "Oh, he held on right up to the last. That reminds me, there is a note from him in my sealskin pocket in which he speaks about being heart-broken, the stars going out, or the moon, I forget which—it may be the sun, and that sort of thing. She went to a wardrobe in search of the missing epistle.

"How fortunate it was that I thought of it," she added. "Yes"—opening it—"this is dated the third and to-day is the eighth. Pretty near, isn't it? But he would not take 'No' for answer, and sent this letter."

Mary thought of one now in her own pocket from the same man that she had read and re-read many times that day.

"Yes, young Crowhall was very persistent. Do you know he actually proposed again when he knew that I was engaged to Jack. When I snubbed him he sent me this note," and she took another from the box. "This came three days ago, from which it would appear he intended to warm up some old broth. You know him. Don't you remember at Lady Grandtown's ball he was with my brother Dick, and you remarked that he was very nice looking?"

Mary Heseltine nodded. She was watching the flames curling about the blackened mass of correspondence that held out so long against annihilation. Her hands were clasped about her knees and she was thinking.

"Wouldn't Bertie Crowhall do for you?" asked her friend laughingly.

She shook her head sadly. "Not now," she replied quickly.

"Oh, I was forgetting. Of course you must tell me all about your engagement, dear. How selfish I am—all this time I have been thinking about myself. Now into the fire with the remainder of love's fragments," and she tumbled the relics into the flames, giving the box a bang to clear out the dust. "That is over. Now, dear, tell me about your romance."

"There is nothing to tell, Ada. You know I was always fond of a joke. There is no engagement."

**Athol Forbes.**

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**The Romance of a Red-haired Girl.**

"Carrots!"

The young girl thus appealed to turned her laughing brown eyes to her brother, who, with his mouth half-full of bread and butter, seemed determined on dividing his attention equally between his elder sister and his breakfast.

Vera Mapleson, the Squire's daughter, was a beautiful girl, but Nature had endowed her with hair of that peculiar shade which is generally known as Titian red; in ordinary lights it appeared to be red, of a bronze-red hue, but if the sun shone on its silky masses it looked like burnished gold.

Vera was lucky in so far that she made her entrance into Society when this coloured hair was in vogue, and she created quite a sensation that the men raved about her, while women rather disdainfully whispered that they could not see what gentlemen found to admire so much in that "carroty-haired Miss Mapleson!"

Her schoolboy brother, young Teddy, had given her the nickname of Carrots. Vera had been away on a month's visit, and had only returned the previous evening. The family were dawdling over breakfast this morning.

"Carrots!" Teddy repeated.

"Teddy!"

"Yes, mater, darling, what is it?"

Gentle Mrs. Mapleson tried to appear as severe as she could.

"Naughty boy, you know I do not like you to call your sister by that vulgar appellation of Carrots."

"But, mater, you know Vera does not mind; it suits her to a T. It is all very fine for the London swells who make love to her to call her hair Venetian gold and Titian red, and all that twaddle, but her hair is red and all aglow, and no mistake!"

"Eat your breakfast, sir, and stop that good-for-nothing tongue of yours," broke in Squire Mapleson from behind a sheet of the *Times*.

So Teddy obediently fell to with a schoolboy's healthy appetite.

"Well, Teddy," smiled Vera, "you seem to be full of some wonderful news; out with it, or it will certainly choke you!"

"Have you seen the new head-gardener?"

"No, how could I have seen him?"

"Well, he is a ripper! I do not know where on earth the governor unearthed him, but he is out-and-out the best fellow I have ever come across. He and I just hit it off capitally together. We are such chums!"

"Teddy, my dear boy, I do not think the gardener is exactly the sort of companion Squire Mapleson's son should choose," and again his mother shook her head.

"Mater, dearest, you do not know what a fine fellow he is, tip-top for the orchid and grape-houses, and he looks every inch as much of a gentleman as any of those London beaux who come after Carrots."

"Teddy!"

"All right, old girl. I won't mention those fellows again if it bothers you. But after breakfast you might just come with me and I'll introduce you to my friend the gardener."

"You absurd boy," laughed the Squire. "Is it likely that your sister is going to be introduced to the gardener!"

"But he is one in a thousand, he tells such tales and yarns. He can construct a boat or anything he likes, he is so clever; just now he is helping me to run up a Robinson Crusoe hut in the old chestnut tree."

"George, do you think it wise that Teddy should be so much in the society of this rough, common man?"

"Mater, he is not rough or common, he might be a prince of the blood royal!" indignantly protested Teddy.

"My dear," answered the Squire, "I do not think you need worry over Teddy, I had the highest references with this man before I engaged him!"

"Indeed, and from whom?"

"Well, from rather an unexpected quarter—from Lord Yvor."

"Lord Yvor! Why, he has not been seen or heard of for over ten years, I believe."

"Lord Yvor is living abroad, he has bought a large place in some remote part of Brittany, and this gardener who has such a splendid testimonial from him, has been in his service for many years. Wishing to return to England, and seeing my advertisement for a head-gardener, he got his master to recommend him. So you see this Phœnix of Teddy's is all right."

"Yes, and just fancy, he has travelled about such lots as Lord Yvor's confidential man, and he seems to know every part of the globe. To hear him talk is just like reading a book of thrilling adventures. Carrots, old girl, you would just rave about him!"

Vera laughed.

"Teddy, dear, I am not made of the same inflammatory stuff as you are. I do not catch fire as easily as you do!"

"Well, you ought to with that coloured hair!"

"Teddy," said the Squire, "give over cheeking your sister. You had better tell your mother and Vera the name of your precious paragon, that will take every spice of romance out of the matter."

"Oh, look here, father, that is mean of you," exclaimed the lad dolefully. "His name is the one thing about him I cannot get over, it does not suit him one bit; it ought to be Lancelot, or Percival, or——"

"Yes, but unfortunately," broke in the Squire, with a loud laugh, "it happens to be Turnips!"

"Turnips!" said Vera, "well, there is nothing like having a name to suit one's vocation. Never mind, Ted, the immortal Shakespeare has said 'What's in a name?'"

Just then the door burst open, and a lovely child entered; she was the very counterpart of Vera in a miniature way; indeed, little Flossie's rippling curls were so like in colour to her elder sister's hair that Teddy was wont to say she would have to be called Carrots the Second!

The child was soon ensconced on Vera's lap hugging her sister, and bestowing on her all the marks of her exuberant affection.

"Carrots," piped Flossie in her clear child's treble, "you must come to the stables to see my new doggie. Father gave it to me, and the gardener is looking after it for me."

"What, Flossie, are you gone on that gardener as much as Teddy is?"

"He's a darling, I love him and mean to marry him when I am grown up," the child said gravely.

Her little speech was greeted with peals of laughter from her father and brother. Mrs. Mapleson looked absolutely horrified.

"Child, you must not say such things; children should not talk about what they do not understand."

Half an hour later Vera, with Flossie clinging to her hand and Teddy hanging on her arm, bent her steps towards the stables to go and inspect the new dog. Suddenly both children relinquished hold of their sister and disappeared behind

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the shrubbery, from which they promptly issued triumphantly dragging forward the gardener.

Tall, squarely built, and remarkably good-looking, he seemed to bear himself as proudly in his working garb as if he were king of the realm.

Little Flossie had taken hold of one of his hands and was patting it affectionately, looking up trustingly into his face. But he gently disengaged himself from the clinging, childish grasp.

"Take care, Miss Flossie, you will soil your pretty white frock, my hands are covered with mould, I have just been repotting plants in the glasshouses."

"Never mind, Turnips, dear," she replied, "earth is not dirty! Look," the child went on, "this is my sister Vera—Carrots, Teddy and I call her, 'cause she's got red hair like me. Is she not beautiful?"

The gardener doffed his cap respectfully, and made of course no answer to Flossie's burst of admiration for her sister.

"You have been very kind to my brother and little sister," Vera said, with one of those beautiful smiles of hers which in Society led captive so many hearts, but here of course it was different—this man was only the gardener, a common man in her father's employment.

"Didn't I tell you my sister was the most queenly beauty that ever walked the earth?" whispered Teddy. "What do you think of her?"

The gardener answered the boy in a low voice:

"She is the master's daughter, and in our humble sphere, Master Teddy, we have no right either to blame or to admire the quality. Miss Flossie wants to see her dog, I think," and, preceded by the child, who danced gleefully in front of him, he disappeared inside the stables.

"Well, Carrots, is he not a splendid fellow?"

"He seems quite a superior sort of person, far above his station. I suppose it is his constant companionship and travelling about with Lord Yvor which has given him a sort of genteel varnish; but I think it is bad for any of that sort of class to lift them from their proper level, it only makes them feel like fish out of water."

And Vera turned away without casting another thought on the gardener.

Vera had always been the idol of her young brother and little sister, and she felt a certain degree of unconscious irritation and jealousy against this man, a stranger, and holding such a humble station in her father's household, who had thus twined himself round the hearts of those two children, where hitherto she had reigned in undisputed sway.

Vera had been back three weeks when one afternoon she went in quest of her little sister; failing to find her in

**On the green sward, at the foot of the tree, sat the head-gardener, with little Flossie on his knee.**

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the house, Vera gave up her search in despair, and made up her mind rather reluctantly to take a solitary stroll by the banks of the tiny river, which wound in and out of the woods at the far end of the domain.

It was a lovely, picturesque walk, with the trees growing so thick that the spot was always shady, no matter how torrid the sun's scorching rays might be, and the placid silver stream slowly flowed onwards, with its incessant musical murmur, and the birds warbled their love-songs overhead.

As Vera neared a favourite nook of hers at the foot of a gnarled, spreading old tree, amidst whose drooping branches climbed in a sort of leafy arbour the rambling trails of the wild, sweet-smelling clematis, she paused as she heard the sound of voices, and peeping through the foliage she beheld a group which made her heart beat with an angry pulsation.

On the green sward, at the foot of the tree, sat the head-gardener, with little Flossie on his knee. The child had her hand clasped in his, while she gazed up confidingly into his face, and listened enraptured to the fairy-tale he was telling her.

"And so Rosalind married the Prince, and they lived happy ever after. There, Miss Flossie, is not that a pretty story?"

Vera just heard the concluding phrase. Flossie put up her hand and patted his cheek with a loving caress.

"Yes, *dear, dear* Turnips, it is a lovely story, like everything which you tell me. And fairy tales always end so, they marry and live happy. *I* mean to marry, to live happy ever after!"

"Do you indeed, Miss Flossie?"

"Yes, when I grow up I am going to marry you, 'cause I love you." And with a pretty, impulsive gesture she flung her arms around his neck, and laid her pretty soft cheek against his.

He stooped and fondly kissed her.

"Little darling, you have not yet been spoilt by the falsehood and hypocrisies of Society; your pure, childish love is true and genuine."

But at this moment Vera felt she could control her feelings no longer—to see this common fellow, one of her father's menials, actually kissing her baby sister, made her proud nature throb in a perfect passion of anger. Pushing back the leafy curtain and advancing with a flushed face, she snatched the child from the gardener's arms.

"You forget yourself strangely, daring to take such unheard of liberties with your master's daughter!"

The cold, hard words seemed to strike him like a pitiless blow; he rose to his feet, a crimson hue overspreading his whole swarthy face.

"I beg your pardon, miss, I did not know I was committing such a crime!"

"This must never occur again," Vera peremptorily commanded in her haughty tones.

"Naughty Carrots!" piped Flossie, with a tiny reproving finger held up. "I won't have you scold Turnips, he is a darling, and I like him to kiss me!"

"Hush, Flossie, dear, this man is only a servant, you must not forget the dignity attached to your person, even at your early age!"

"I don't care, Flossie will always love you just the same," and the child held out appealing little arms to her humble friend.

"No, Miss Flossie," he said sadly, "you and I must cease to be friends from this day forth."

"I *will* be your friend always," announced the child in a determined voice, "and Carrots is naughty!"

It was gall and wormwood to Vera to feel that in the contest with this man she was not getting the best of it by any manner of means; he seemed to exercise some sort of extraordinary power of fascination on the child.

"Turnips," she said severely, "I shall get my father to dismiss you at once if ever you take such a liberty again with Miss Flossie."

"Very well, Miss!"

He touched his cap respectfully, and abruptly turned away.

One evening little Flossie seemed unusually fretful and peevish; when the nurse came to take her to bed she clung to Vera and refused to leave her.

"Never mind, nurse," said Vera, "I shall keep Flossie in my room to-night, she will sleep with me."

The child had nestled contentedly with her head on her sister's shoulder, and later on she fell asleep peacefully in Vera's arms.

Suddenly, in the dead of night, Vera awoke with a strange suffocating feeling at her throat. What was this smell, this dense smoke which seemed to fill the room?

She jumped out of bed, hurried on a dressing-gown, and opened her door; she gasped and almost reeled back with the volumes of thick smoke which assailed her. The house was on fire! She heard confused noises, smothered cries, trampling of feet under her window.

Vera's room was the turret-chamber, far away from any of the inhabited parts of the house. It was a fancy of hers to occupy this quaint old room, perched up high in the old turret. She used to say laughingly that she felt herself quite a mediæval princess up there in her castellated bower.

Alas, this strange freak of hers seemed likely now to cost her her life, and, worse than all, Flossie, darling little unconscious, sleeping Flossie, was doomed.

The passage and stairs were already impassable, the flames were even now invading the little antechamber which opened into the bedroom. Vera shut the heavy oak door, but how long would that last as an effectual barrier against the cruel, encroaching enemy.

Catching up the still sleeping child in her arms, she flew to the window. Alas, no hope of escape lay there; to attempt a leap from such a height meant a certain and horrible death.

Far down below she could see figures rushing to and fro, and hear agonised cries and wild appeals; no doubt they had been missed, but who could dare attempt their rescue when all around the foot of the turret the flames were gathering in force and fury.

Vera turned to One whom we all seek when we find human aid failing us. Still clasping her little sister on her bosom, the despairing girl flung herself on her knees by the side of the bed, and sent up an earnest appeal for help to the throne of the Everlasting Father. Even as she prayed, help was nearer to her than she could possibly imagine.

A man had scaled the burning walls; scorning danger for himself, he only thought of the helpless girl and child, and determined to save them, or die in the attempt.

As he reached the window he saw Vera on her knees, and Flossie, who had just awakened, sobbing piteously. The child hardly realised what was wrong, but instinctively she felt something was amiss. The man strode across the room; laying his hand on Vera's shoulder he spoke in authoritative tones:

"Come, Miss Mapleson, there is no time to be lost!"

Vera turned and confronted—the gardener! How bitterly had she scorned him, how deeply had she resented his daring to come between her and her child sister's love, and yet now she turned towards him with such infinite relief and trust.

"Oh, Flossie, my darling little Flossie, save her!" And she held out the child to him.

"Yes, I shall save her first, and then return for you."

"No, no, that would be folly, you would only madly imperil your own life! Go, save Flossie, and leave me to my fate!"

He lost no time in answering, but, taking a blanket from off the bed, and wrapping the child in it, proceeded to make his perilous descent in feverish haste, fearful that he might be too late to save the one he had left!

At the foot of the tower he hurriedly placed the child in the Squire's arms, and, regardless of the imminent peril he now ran, as the walls might crash in at any moment, he once more went up to the turret-chamber. He did not see Vera at first, then he discerned her lying senseless on the floor.

He groaned aloud.

"Too late, after all!"

He seized her in his arms, and, yielding to an irresistible impulse, he strained her to his heart, and pressed his lips to

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hers; they were cold and bloodless, but, with infinite relief, he knew she was not dead, but only unconscious. When he reached the ground, clasping his precious burden, strong man as he was, he reeled, and would have fallen, if ready hands had not been put forth to save him.

The whole of that wing where the turret chamber had been situated was levelled to the earth by the devouring flames, but the other part of the building suffered little, and with the help of the firemen the burning foe was quenched and conquered at last.

The next morning poor little Flossie lay in bed feverish and flushed; the fright, the doctor asserted, had been most injurious to the sensitive, highly-strung child.

Mrs. Mapleson was quite prostrated, and unable to leave her room, but Vera, very white-faced, and with large black circles round her eyes, was untiring in her care and devotion to her little sister; nothing would induce her to absent herself from the child's bedside.

As Flossie tossed and turned with burning cheeks and glistening eyes, she continually asked for her dear, good, kind Turnips.

No thought of petty jealousies now reigned in Vera's mind; her whole, heartfelt gratitude went out to the man who had so nobly risked his own life to save hers and her sister's.

She knew from Squire Mapleson that the gardener had firmly and proudly refused any sort of monetary reward when the grateful father had gone to thank him for saving his two children. He needed not to be paid, he had said, for accomplishing a common act of humanity.

A maid had been dispatched to seek Turnips. When Vera heard a gentle tap at the door she rose and opened it herself. The gardener stood before her, quiet, self-possessed, and respectful as usual.

"You sent for me, Miss?"

"Yes, my little sister is ill, and she kept repeatedly calling for you, and I"—she coloured and hesitated—"I wanted to thank you for saving my life and Flossie's."

"I only did my duty, Miss," he said coldly. "I am sorry poor little Miss Flossie is ill."

Just then Vera caught sight of his right hand, which was bandaged.

"Oh, you got hurt last night, injured while in the act of saving us!"

"Oh, it is nothing, Miss, a mere scratch, only it will unfit me for my work for the next few days!"

"Oh, that is of little consequence!"

"Excuse me, Miss," and he drew himself up proudly, "but I am a paid menial in your father's service, and must fulfil my engagements to my master."

"Not when you have imperilled your own life to save his daughters," she said rather impatiently. "Has your hand been seen to, have you had the doctor?"

"No, Miss, it is really nothing. Let me just have a look at Miss Flossie."

He moved to the bed-side. Flossie knew him at once.

"Turnips, my dear Turnips!" and she held out her little arms. "Please kiss me!"

He shook his head, but Vera moved swiftly up to him, and, laying her hand on his arm, whispered—

"Yes, certainly, do as she bids you."

"You once forbade me ever to dare to take such a liberty with your sister."

"It is different now, you have earned the right to kiss her since you saved her life."

"He saved *yours* too, Carrots!" said Flossie, with startling promptitude. "He may kiss you too!"

Vera flushed hotly, while a guilty look crept over the man's face; to hide his confusion he bent over the tiny cot, and Flossie put her arms round his neck and kissed him. Then the child half rose in her bed, and, taking his hand and Vera's, joined them together in her two little ones. She looked earnestly at them both—

"You will be friends now, Carrots, won't you, with Turnips, 'cause I love you *both* so, you *must* love each other too."

The man disengaged his hand quickly and moved to the window as if he wished to avoid his countenance betraying him. After a few moments of awkward silence Vera followed him.

"Turnips," she said gently, then she stopped abruptly, "have you not got any other name but that one?"

He smiled grimly.

"You don't like my name, Miss?"

She blushed and lowered her eyes.

"I should like," she said in a low voice, "to think of the one who saved my life and my sister's by some other name than that one."

"My Christian name is Donald."

"Thank you," she hesitated, then breathed the name very softly. "Donald," she went on, speaking rapidly, "I have heard from my father how you have refused to accept from him any acknowledgment of your noble action; will you at least accept this from me? I had it painted for myself, but I can easily get its exact duplicate done."

She held in her hand an exquisitely painted miniature of Flossie, beautifully mounted in a tiny gold filagree frame set with diamonds and pearls.

He took it and gazed intently at it.

"How like! The very counterpart," he muttered almost unconsciously.

"Everyone says Flossie is so like me," she said softly.

"Thank you, Miss, I accept this—at least the painting, but

**Laying her hand on his arm she whispered: "Yes, do as she bids you."**

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not the frame," and, taking out his penknife, he deliberately detached the rich setting from the small ivory plaque and returned it to her. It was done in such a masterful way that Vera did not even remonstrate.

"Good-morning, Miss," and without another word he left the room.

* * * * *

A fortnight had passed and Flossie was about and her own bright little self again. And yet Vera carefully avoided asking her little sister to accompany her, as she left the house for the grounds one afternoon. The girl was very pale, her lips were set and resolute. She entered most of the glass houses one after the other; at last, in the palm-house, she espied at the far end a familiar figure, and without a moment's hesitation she went straight up to him.

"My father tells me you are leaving us, Donald; is that so?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Why?"

"Because I have committed a crime, a deadly crime, Miss."

"*You* committed a crime, Donald! What folly is this? I cannot believe you could ever do anything wrong!"

"And yet, Miss, my crime in your eyes and in those of your set could not be condoned."

"I should *never* blame you," she murmured very softly.

"Shall I tell you what my crime has been?" he said resolutely.

"Yes," she answered, but she averted her head as if afraid to meet his searching eyes, which seemed to read the very secrets of her soul.

"I have been mad enough to allow myself to care for you, Miss Mapleson. I must leave this place at once because I love you, and I will not face your bitter scorn." He folded his arms and looked at her almost defiantly.

A radiant light of intense happiness diffused itself over her features.

"Donald, I do not scorn you," she whispered softly.

"What, you have no words of scathing contempt for the humble menial who has the arrogance to lift his eyes to yours! You do not seek your father and bid him ignominiously drive forth the insolent, low-born churl who dares to insult you with an avowal of his love?"

Vera drew near to him and, putting her hand in his, she said:

"To me you are no menial, Donald, but the noblest and bravest of men—the one man I love."

He put his arm around her, and she let her head rest on his shoulder; his manly voice trembled and betrayed the strong, intense feeling which moved him as he bent over her.

"Will you indeed give up all—home, family, social position—to attach yourself to my humble fortunes and will you stoop to marry *me?*"

"Yes, Donald," came the answer in a clear, firm voice; "I will gladly give up all so as to be your wife."

"Even to taking the obnoxious name of Turnips?" he smiled, and, bending down, imprinted a passionate kiss on her unresisting lips. "Vera, my darling," he used her Christian name for the first time, "mine at last, and this time I have the right to kiss you."

"You never kissed me before," she protested.

"Yes, Vera, I have a confession to make. The night of the fire, when you lay in my arms, I acted the part of a coward; my brain and heart seemed to be on fire, I was mad for love of you, I despaired of ever winning you, and, Vera, I kissed you then. Ever since I have despised myself for having taken advantage of your helpless state when you were literally at my mercy. Darling, will you forgive me?"

"Nay, Donald, I could not be angry with you if I tried!"

"Well, these reassuring words give me fresh courage for yet another confession I must make. I am not what I seem. I have wooed and won you under a false name. You will have no need to be called Mrs. Turnips!"

She looked up at him in a startled way.

"Oh, what is it? Tell me the truth, quick, Donald! But perhaps Donald is not your real name either?"

"Yes, Donald is my Christian name; I could not bear to mislead you about that. But my full name and title is Albert Edward Donald Lynton, Lord Yvor."

Vera released herself from his incircling arm and started back a few paces from him.

"You! Lord Yvor!"

"Yes; will you deny the love to Lord Yvor which you so readily granted to the humble gardener?"

Poor Vera gazed at him bewildered.

"I cannot understand—tell me, what does it all mean?"

"Come," and, taking her hand, he led her to a rustic seat; "let us sit down and I will tell you all. Ten years ago I was a very young man, full of life and hopes; everything smiled on me; I was endowed with an immense fortune, titled, and the master of Pen-Yvor Castle, which, as you know, is close by your father's house, and one of the show places of England.

"I fell in love with a girl—don't be jealous, Vera, darling, I did not love her as I love you now; it was a sort of boyish infatuation. However, I discovered that this girl did not love me really; she feigned an affection for me which she did not feel, and she had simply accepted my hand because I was Lord Yvor, and was so wealthy. In fact I discovered she loved another man whom she had jilted to accept my suit.

"I charged her with her baseness, and was so revolted with the whole of womankind that I swore I would never wed. I shut up Pen-Yvor Castle, went abroad, travelled about seeking solace in hunting, shooting and yachting.

"Finally I settled down in a remote part of Brittany, where I addicted myself to gardening and all sorts of horticulture. This is where I gained the knowledge which rendered me fit to fulfil my functions of head gardener on your father's estate.

"Last winter I happened to go down to the Riviera, and at the very hotel where I was stopping at Cannes you chanced to be staying with your mother. I believe you had come there to spend a few weeks on account of Mrs. Mapleson's health.

"I rarely used my title abroad, and was inscribed on the hotel books as Mr. Lynton. At any rate, neither you nor your mother noticed me, but I saw you on several occasions, and I could never again banish your image from my mind. I returned to Brittany and sought to forget you, but in vain.

"Of course, the plain course open to me would have been to resume my rank and title, return to Pen-Yvor Castle and woo and win you as Lord Yvor. But I recoiled from such means. I dreaded being accepted by you simply because I was Lord Yvor. That bitter experience of my youth haunted me still. So I thought out this plan.

"I answered your father's advertisement for a gardener, presented myself with excellent testimonials written by myself as Lord Yvor, and was accepted. When I came here first, to my intense disappointment you were away on a visit, and only returned three weeks later.

"Meanwhile I had quite lost my heart on little Flossie; the child was so like you, the colour of her hair, everything about her, reminded me of you, and I loved her first for your sake, but very soon she won me herself by her winning, loving little ways. Your brother Teddy also took the strongest possible fancy to me, and those two children brightened my whole life.

"Then you came, and your proud, haughty air chilled me; from the very first you seemed to take a strong dislike to me; and the day you surprised me kissing Flossie, you spurned me as if I were mud! Oh, how I writhed under your cruel, taunting words!"

"Donald, forgive me, I think I had begun to love you even then, but in my fierce pride I hated and despised myself for thinking of such a one as I thought you then were. Afterwards, when you saved my life and Flossie's, love conquered pride, and I knew then that I loved you above everyone on earth, and I felt that I could gladly give up everything to be your wife."

"My beautiful Vera, for your sake I wish I were a king, so as to crown that wealth of tawny gold!" And once more Lord Yvor bent to impress kisses on her lips, brow and hair.

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Suddenly upon the absorbed and enraptured lovers there broke a shrill, childish voice:

"Oh, Turnips, Carrots, I have been looking for you everywhere," and little Flossie stood before them. They both looked utterly confused, and Vera's cheeks assumed the brightest of crimson hues. The child gazed at them in a puzzled way.

"Why do you pretend you won't kiss before me, and then do it on the sly? Turnips, Carrots," she continued severely, "that's surely wrong. Father says we must always do everything openly," and the clear, innocent blue eyes fixed themselves reproachfully on the guilty couple.

"You are right Flossie darling, but your sister and I do not mean to act in an underhand way, we are going straight to Squire Mapleson to tell him we are engaged."

Flossie shook her head sadly.

"Oh, you naughty, bad Turnips! So you are going to marry Carrots? What about *me*, then, when I grow up?"

The look of despair on the child's face amused and touched the young earl. He caught up Flossie in his arms.

"Little one, won't you have me as a brother instead?"

This new suggestion delighted her, she laughed merrily and clapped her hands.

"Yes, like Teddy, only a much bigger brother—that will be nice; and you will always tell me pretty fairy tales?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Still, Carrots *did* say I was not to forget the dignity attached to my person when you kissed me. And now she lets you kiss her, so I s'pose she's forgotten *her* dignity!"

"Oh, you terrible child," chimed in Vera, and she in her turn hugged little Flossie.

"That child's logic is certainly disconcerting," laughed Lord Yvor.

"And when you're married, Carrots, you will never quarrel with Turnips again, will you?" the child asked eagerly.

"Well, that depends on his conduct to me," and Vera looked archly at the young man.

It was a seven days' wonder in Society when Lord Yvor's romantic engagement to Vera Mapleson became known. As for Teddy, he was wild with delight; he confided to his future brother-in-law that he was the dearest old chap in the world, and that he had known from the very first that he was a true gentleman. The beautiful Lady Yvor and her husband are still known among their very intimate friends by the quaint names of Carrots and Turnips.

**Lily Butler.**

# The Gentle Art of Cooking.

## How it Caused an Upset at Laburnum Villa.

It was well on towards the end of September. Mr and Mrs. Sinclair, with Toddles, who was now almost four years old, were sojourning at Llandudno.

Time was drawing near when the trio must say farewell to all the delights of North Wales; and it had been decided that Gerald should return on the Wednesday and manage to exist until his wife followed on the Saturday. He was not quite sure whether he could live without her for three days, or whether he could do without the vicious tugs at his moustache that Toddles was in the habit of giving, but he would try.

It was, therefore, in a sad mood and a London and North-Western train that he arrived in London once more. His sad mood grew sadder as he reached Laburnum Villa and thought of the three days he must spend alone there.

He occupied two hours after he reached home in writing to his wife telling her how miserable he felt, how lonely he would be, and what a long way off Saturday seemed. Then he went out and ate a huge dinner, after which he visited the Pavilion.

He became depressed again when he reached home early Thursday morning and was the sole occupant of Laburnum Villa, for the servants were away too.

On the following morning he dressed and went to town for breakfast, and that same night he filled up by going to the Tivoli. In the meantime writing to Mrs. Sinclair and saying that the days were like eternity.

When he arose on Friday morning he said to himself: "You know, Gerald my boy, it's silly to go out and get meals when there's bound to be stuff downstairs to eat. Why not get your own breakfast?"

So elated with this idea was he, that he rushed downstairs as he was, and hunted about. Naturally there wasn't much about, as the house had been empty for three weeks. But in the larder he came across a piece of bacon, and then the thought struck him that there was no milk or bread.

He rushed to the front door and opened it, the road was empty.

Suddenly a small boy turned the corner, and Gerald waved frantically and called to him. The small boy looked his jaw dropped, his eyes went wide open, and his cap visibly rose on his head. Then he turned and bolted as though running for his life.

"H'm! Curious," observed Gerald aloud, as he thoughtfully rubbed his face. Then to his astonishment his hand came away covered with lather, and he remembered that in the enthusiasm of the moment he had thrown down his razor as he was shaving and had come downstairs simply attired in shirt and trousers. No wonder the small boy ran home and got whipped for saying he had seen a madman with froth all over his face.

But Gerald was still enthusiastic, and, after dressing, he commissioned another small boy to fetch him milk, eggs, and butter, from a local dairyman who was in the habit of supplying Laburnum Villa.

Then he got to work. He sliced the bacon first and then his finger. This necessitated a stoppage for bandaging the cut, and talking about it in a humid strain. Then he got a frying-pan and put it over the gas, whilst he went to fetch some water for the kettle.

A tin-tack penetrated his carpet slipper, whilst in the scullery, which necessitated a further stoppage. At last he returned to the kitchen, but was assailed by a nauseous odour and a cloud of smoke. At first he thought the house was on fire, but all he found was a hole in the frying-pan. This was certainly awkward, he would have to find another frying-pan.

Then the thought struck him that he had seen people put grease into frying-pans, and, accordingly, when he had

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found a second of these utensils, he put in a liberal dab of butter and then the bacon.

Now came the eggs. He had certainly observed people break them, and thought he could do it. He picked up one gingerly, and knocked it on the side of the frying-pan. Unfortunately he hit it so hard that, before he had time to lift it and drop the contents into the pan, the whole lot had dropped over the gas stove.

It was aggravating, to say the least of it, but he was more careful with the rest, and presently had a right royal breakfast of eggs, bacon, bread, butter, marmalade, and tea before him.

There was one other little upset, though. That was when he went to pour the tea out, only water came, as he had forgotten to put the tea-leaves in. But still he got on first-rate considering everything, was his own impression.

At the office that day a great thought struck him. He would take home three other men who were always prepared for, what he would have termed in his younger days, a lark; they could cook some dinner and have bridge or music afterwards.

He was so fired by this idea that he left the office immediately, and went round hunting up the other fellows. By a piece of good fortune he found they were all disengaged, and were quite willing to come.

For the purposes of this story I will call these three friends of Gerald by the well-known names of Brown, Jones, and Smith. They were three bachelors, and were well-known on the Stock Exchange as the ringleaders of almost every joke that was played.

Gerald met them at five o'clock and they went together to Leadenhall Market, where they purchased: A shoulder of lamb, a tin of ox-tail soup, potatoes, cauliflower, artichokes, fruit.

Gerald wanted to buy bacon and eggs as well, because he fancied he was great guns at cooking them, but he was persuaded not to. Whilst Smith offered to make an apple-pie if they'd get the various ingredients, only as nobody knew what they were, they decided simply to have fruit.

All the purchases were packed with the purchasers in a couple of hansons, and they drove off to Laburnum Villa. Brown and Jones *would* sing, and as they were not both in one cab, the two hansoms had to keep together, so, as Brown put it, the glorious harmony could be heard.

At length Laburnum Villa was reached, and very soon the culinary operations were put in hand.

Smith volunteered to open the tin of ox-tail soup, and after chopping a lump out of the table and cutting his coat-sleeve, he succeeded in breaking the table knife which he was using. Someone then suggested trying a tin-opener which was used most successfully.

Then Jones, in a sonorous voice, read out the directions, which Gerald, Brown, and Smith all attempted to carry out together. The result was that Smith upset the hot water over Brown's foot, which resulted further in a desultory argument. Jones laughed so much that he upset the tin of ox-tail, whereupon half of the contents spread out in a large brown stain over the hitherto white table.

At last, though, they got the ingredients together, and presently Gerald poured a hot, sticky, very dark liquid into a tureen. Somebody suggested it might grow cold whilst the joint was being cooked; so they turned the gas on and put the tureen in the oven to keep warm.

Then came the great cooking feat of the evening, the joint and the vegetables. Now each of them was firmly convinced he could cook the joint like a *chef*, so it was arranged they should toss for it. They did it on the principle of "odd man"—that is, they all tossed, Gerald's coin came down "heads" and the other three "tails," therefore Gerald being odd man, had first choice.

He chose the joint.

Smith won the next, and chose the potatoes. Brown got the cauliflower, and Jones the artichokes.

Then Gerald disappeared and presently returned with Mrs. Beeton under his arm (figuratively speaking, of course). His advent was greeted with a chorus of cheers. After much perusal of this lady's interesting work, a remarkable scene ensued.

Gerald was doing what he called basting. He'd got very mixed up, but was quite happy in laying butter and flour an inch thick on that unhappy shoulder of lamb. He also made a hole in it and filled it with butter and flour.

"That makes the gravy, you know, you chaps," he said.

The others listened in awe-stricken silence, and watched with fascinated eyes. But presently they returned to their work.

Smith was cutting bits off the potatoes and off his fingers, whilst he swore softly to himself.

Brown insisted in cutting all the green off the cauliflower, because he said you never eat it.

Jones wasn't quite sure what you did with artichokes, but still he thought they should be pealed, so he cut them about until there wasn't much of the original vegetable left.

Brown and Jones were still musically inclined, and insisted on singing duets. Oh! Mrs. Sinclair, if you could only see your kitchen now.

Presently Gerald grew tired of basting and put the shoulder of lamb into the oven just below the tureen full of ox-tail soup. He then turned the gas on full, and refilled his pipe.

"Bang!"

A loud report rang through the kitchen. Brown and Jones stopped singing. Smith ceased to swear, and Gerald dropped his pipe.

Then a hissing, bubbling noise was heard from the oven, whilst clouds of steam poured out. Between them they opened the oven door, and then, ye gods! what a picture.

The tremendous heat of the oven had been too much for the tureen, and, in consequence, it had cracked. All the soup had flown down over the shoulder of lamb and then on to the gas, putting it out.

Then Brown and Jones fell into each other's arms and laughed until they sobbed. Whilst Smith and Gerald held a heated argument on the subject.

They eventually decided that it would improve the shoulder of lamb to be bathed in ox-tail soup, and once more went on with the culinary operations. Smith got the potatoes in his saucepan and then dropped it on the floor, where it unfortunately fell on his toe. Brown and Jones resumed their hilarity, whilst Smith resumed his speech. They picked the potatoes up and got them in a saucepan again.

Then Brown and Jones had their cauliflower and artichokes ready, and placed them in saucepans. Unfortunately Jones dropped the artichokes into the wrong saucepan, so they cooked with the potatoes.

Gerald proposed a rubber of whist whilst they waited for the dinner to cook, and this proved so interesting that they forgot all about the cooking.

Presenting a horrible smell of burning meat pervaded the kitchen. Gerald jumped up, and, rushing for the oven, pulled the door open. There was the shoulder of lamb burnt to a most mournful shade of black.

But despite this and the fact that the cauliflower had gone to pieces, and that the potatoes and artichokes were only half-cooked, they still sat down to dinner. And, what is more, they ate it. They admitted afterwards that the fruit was really very nice.

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"Well, what shall it be, you chaps?" said Gerald, when they had finished eating. "Bridge or music?"

They decided to have music.

"Come along then into the drawing-room," cried Gerald. "And we'll outdo Orpheus and make the welkin ring."

They all commenced to smoke pipes in the drawing-room. Shades of Mrs. Sinclair! Gerald officiated at the piano.

Glee after glee was howled. From "Who will o'er the downs so free?" to "Come, Landlord, fill the blowing bowl."

Suddenly there was a ring at the bell.

"Cease those mellow tones, Smith," cried Gerald. "Go! Unloose the portals wide, and see who stands before our gates."

Smith departed to the door, where we will accompany him. Another impatient ring quickened his footsteps, and then he opened to the caller.

"Great Scott!" he muttered, and then he was dumb. For there was a lady with a little child; from her appearance Smith knew it was Mrs. Sinclair, although he had never met her. She shot one indignant glance at him, and then swept in, leaving him gasping at the door. With a sudden inspiration he seized his hat and coat and rushed out into the wild, dark night.

And this was the reception Mrs. Sinclair received.

"Who was the weary wayfarer, Smith?" bellowed her husband. "But come along and take the tenor in 'Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen.'"

Through the cloud of smoke a figure advanced, and it said: "I am the weary wayfarer."

Gerald turned and saw. His lower jaw dropped, and a despairing groan emanated from his lips. Brown and Jones hurriedly made for the door, and when once safe in the street, they leant up against one another and howled with laughter until a policeman moved them on.

But what of Gerald?

Laden with the consciousness of guilt he sat wretchedly in the tobacco-laden air of the Laburnum Villa drawing-room. Mrs. Sinclair stood before him. She, too, was speechless, but from a different reason. Then she found her tongue and for a quarter of an hour she talked without cessation.

This was the way he pined for her. This was the way that he passed the eternity of time that he spoke of. Then she ran off at a tangent, and spoke of turning her drawing-room into a tap-room with six or seven pot-house loafers.

"It's always the way. Oh, you deceitful man. I can't let you out of my sight for a minute."

"But, dear——"

"Don't call me dear, Mr. Sinclair."

"Well, then. You said you weren't coming back until to-morrow. And we could have got the room tidy by then, and the dinner things washed up."

"Dinner things," shrieked Mrs. Sinclair. "Do you mean to say that you and those brutes have been eating?"

Here Toddles began to weep profoundly.

"See how you're treating your son, sir. Oh! My child! What a father you have to be sure."

"Confound it all, Ethel——"

"That's right, swear at me. Abuse me, go on, I can bear it."

"What's the good of trying to talk sense to a woman," muttered Gerald disgustedly.

In the meantime Mrs. Sinclair had gone into the dining-room, and Gerald heard her shriek of dismay with an inward tremor.

Then he heard her visit the kitchen, and another shriek quite upset his nerves. So that when Mrs. Sinclair burst into the room talking excitedly, he made not the slightest attempt to argue.

"Spoilt a dinner service! All the saucepans ruined! The kitchen table spoilt! Messes all over the linoleum, and the gas stove like a pig-sty! Oh, you—you—you b-b-brute!" Then she commenced to cry. "This was what (sob) I came home a day earlier for (sob). This was the loving (sob)—welcome I expected. Ten great drunken beasts (sobs) trapsing about the house (sob)—(more sobs)."

Gerald thought tremendously.

"How dare you do it in my house? Twenty great hulking brutes spoiling everything?"

Gerald ventured to suggest that he owned a portion of the house at any rate, and that she might be exaggerating about the number of visitors.

"Go away and don't talk to me," she cried, as he approached her.

And then he went into the kitchen. Cleared up the mess. Washed up the dinner things and put them away. Then he commenced on the pans and pots to try to get them clean. So intent was he on his task that he did not hear a light footstep cross the kitchen, or know that there was anyone else in the room beside him, until a soft voice whispered in his ear:

"That isn't the way to do it, Gerald, let me help?"

Regardless of the condition of his hands he turned and took his wife in his arms, and—well, that's how the quarrel ended.

**E. Newton Bungey.**

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[*Other Laburnum Villa stories which have already appeared are:*

*"A Romance of an Unpaid Bill."—February 21st.*

*"What's in a Name?"—May 16th.*

*"Vice-Versa."—May 30th.*]

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Fashionable Patient: "This bill is exorbitant." Doctor: "But, my dear sir——" Fashionable Patient: "Not a word, sir. Either cut it into two, or find something else the matter with me."


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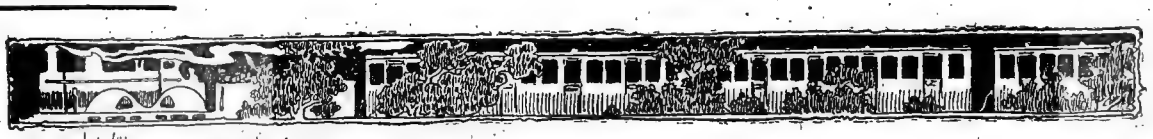

"Who is that?" he asked, gazing steadfastly on the face of the girl in the picture.

# The Return of the Prodigal.

**Being the fifth of six stories told in the Brighton Express and now related**

BY

**WINIFRED GRAHAM.**

Again the six friends met on their return from business. During the cold weather the story telling became quite an institution.

That night Mr. Pitman, who was an amateur artist, and indulged an impressionist craze in leisure hours, offered to paint them a word picture from human life. He was screwing up his eyes as if the window were a vanishing point or a perspective, and trying to discern the passing scene without through grey evening mists.

"I wish I could get that effect on canvas," he said. "The dim houses wrapped in gloom, the half light. I might call it 'Seen from a railway train'—just one of those fashionable blurs that create talk and sensation."

"I know the sort of thing," said Stourbridge. "You see a dark object in a fog, and wonder if it is a church tower or a hansom cab; then you see it's a signal-box—awfully clever, but mightily uninteresting!"

"I say, I heard an awfully queer tale to-day," began Carter, stroking his imperial.

"Yes, but don't do me out of my word picture!" sighed Pitman.

"We'll toss up," said Harford, drawing a coin from his overcoat pocket. "Heads Pitman, tails, Carter."

He threw it in the air.

"Heads it is; fire away, Pitman, we are all impatience."

Pitman surveyed his audience with a benign smile.

"She was an artist, of course," he commenced, "that is why I am interested in her history—an heiress, young and beautiful, who adored painting, and only lived for art. Her name? Oh, yes!—Moore Meredith. Her age? Well, a woman's age is sacred after seventeen. She had been an orphan since her infancy, and lived with an old uncle, who eventually condescended to die in the peaceful, orderly manner suitable to his well-regulated household, and courteous considerate nature.

"He just took up his evening paper, leant back in a red leather chair, and breathed his soul into space, without even troubling to ring the bell. To enhance this estimable gentleman's merits, I may add, he left his heroine his fortune.

"She had, you will see, no need to paint for money, but the love of fame had been implanted in her breast since childhood. She was ambitious, and her one aim in existence was to win renown. She longed to create a picture that would take the world by storm, which, after all, was a fortunate craving, since it compensated for the loss of those dead faces that should have brightened her life.

"Art was her father, her mother, her all. Genius the companion of her solitude, and the all-engrossing study gave her something to live for.

"She might have spent her time in the gay and frivolous set that eagerly desired to enlist this brilliant young heiress into their ranks; but she preferred the attractions of her quiet studio—worked like the veriest slave—with no one to gainsay her.

"'Every man to his taste'; so the world passed by, and smiled.

"One morning Moore Meredith sat idly in her studio—it was the first day for weeks she had been inactive—while the early sun crept through her windows, shedding its bright light round the model throne and on all the artistic adornments of the room.

"In the centre stood a large easel, bearing a half-finished painting, at which she was gazing somewhat wistfully.

"'That picture,' she said, rising and standing before it with folded arms, 'might make my name if only I could get the man's face.'

"She knew exactly what she wanted, but the face was hard to find. Already the form of a beautiful girl, in a clinging robe of palest grey, floating like feathery evening mists about her figure, stood out on the canvas.

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"Her eyes wore a fascinated, half-fearful look, suggestive of a creature in pain; her expression was one of horrified surprise; yet the lips were parted in a helpless, tragic smile, so flickering, so undecided, that it seemed to fade and wake again before your sight. Surely this was genius in its true sense! And that fair, yet puzzled face was listening. You could conjure up the storm of thought in the distracted mind, and tell that she was wavering up on the brink of evil.

"The second character had yet to be painted, brought to life by Moore's magic touch. She pictured him in her mind with rugged features and haggard eyes, a man with a striking personality, years older than the girl. It is not the fresh buoyancy of youth that always has the power to charm. More frequently, to the pure, unsophisticated woman, who has just stepped, with reluctant feet, from 'where the brook and river meet,' the determined man of the world—the man with a past—can infatuate her trusting soul.

"'He should stand,' thought Moore, 'against a dark background, in the act of drawing the trembling maiden boldly to him, while the summer evening closed around them, as if to hide her weakness and blind his hungering eyes.'

"There were daring touches in the half-completed work, significant of the artist's spirit and vivid imagination; it was the work of a skilful and well-trained hand, that immediately demanded more than ordinary attention. Moore was satisfied with what she had done, it pleased her artistic eye, but she was troubled how to proceed.

"'I *must* get a model,' she cried, pacing the room; 'if I fail I will burn the picture! The girl does well; she is life-like, she is possible; but the crowning point is the man!'

"She was expecting some models on approval, and, as if in answer to her thoughts, a voice said outside the locked door:

"'A gentleman to see you, miss.'

"She hurried eagerly upstairs, all impatient to scrutinise the newcomer. So many interviews had proved fruitless. Wrinkled old seamen, Olympian gods, ferocious brigands, blue-eyed boys, Hercules, and Saint Sebastians had come in turn seeking employment, but she had sent them all away with a hopeful 'Some other time, perhaps.'

"As Moore entered the room she noticed at a glance that her wildest expectations were realised. Here was the face of her dreams, the man who had whispered of worse than death in the ear of her grey-gowned heroine! Marks of care lined his brow, his features were tanned and weather-beaten by a long sojourn in foreign lands. As she advanced towards him a bewildering variety of expressions flitted across his countenance, while his eyes mutely owned the searching interest and admiration she aroused in him.

"His was no ordinary, commonplace personality. Those eyes, in action or repose equally irresistible, had a power to charm at one moment and terrify the next. They were exactly what she longed to depict. His dark hair was streaked with grey; he had passed the prime of youth.

"As she felt the magnetic influence of his glance Moore Meredith could have shrieked for joy.

"With an effort to control her excitement she addressed him:

"'You have come to sit for me? I am so glad, because you are just the model I am in need of; I might have searched the world over before I found a better. I am madly anxious to finish my picture, and was perfectly in despair. It is heartrending to be stopped in your work. I shall want you to-day—don't say you're engaged? I don't mind what I pay, but I must begin this very morning—now, at once!'

"He bowed assent, but there was a queer light in his eyes, a sad drooping of the lips.

"Moore gave a sigh of relief.

"'Come, and I will show you my studio. Every minute I am away seems waste of time.'

"Fired by her enthusiasm, the stranger followed.

"As Moore turned back to speak she noticed how well he walked, and how upright he was. She had an uncomfortable feeling that the new model was a gentleman.

(*Continued overleaf.*)


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"'I suppose Mr. Robinson of the Art School sent you?' continued Moore.

"Again he inclined his head. As yet he had only listened to her respectfully, without uttering a word.

"She found herself waiting curiously to hear his voice.

"'This is my picture,' she said, 'what do you think of it?'

"He stared at the face on the canvas long and earnestly; it seemed to transfix him. She fancied he paled and breathed harder. Had she so well depicted what was in her mind, that even the sight of this one figure in the unfinished scene could move a strong man almost to tears?

"'It is wonderful,' he said at last, turning his eyes full upon Moore, and his voice vibrated oddly; it was just the sad, low tone she had expected, and that of an educated man.

"Then he walked to the spot she indicated, and as she turned to her easel and took up her palette her cup of happiness was full. All that morning she kept him there, working feverishly. He seemed to catch from her a keen sense of delight, an all-absorbing interest.

"'You will come to-morrow—and every to-morrow till the picture is complete?' she said, smiling. 'I feel exhilarated by to-day's progress, for I am the hardest master to please over my work. Sometimes I destroy it in a frenzy; occasionally I have been mean enough to send some thankless tasks to decorate the walls of children's hospitals. They should have the best; but such is life. Ah, you smile. Perhaps you have done the same?'

"'Who has not? The greatest works go naturally to the highest places; the lowliest do for the sick poor. It was ever so.'

"There was a ring of sarcasm in his reply that chilled Moore.

"The man perplexed her.

"Day after day he returned to his post, watching her every movement during those silent hours in a way that occasionally made the girl self-conscious.

"The picture was nearly finished and the artist quite worn out with fatigue, but unwilling to own it till the very last touch of the brush should kiss farewell to the radiant canvas.

"'I want to give you a more speaking impression,' she said. 'You don't *live* at this moment. Everyone must see you are talking—animated. I could put greater life into your face. I know——'

"'I think,' replied the man, 'that I am in fault. I grow heavy while sitting in silence.'

"Moore's face brightened.

"'Then talk,' she said; 'there's a good idea; tell me a story if you will.'

"'Shall I?'

"'Yes, yes.'

"'But perhaps you would rather not listen?'

"'What is it to be about?'

"'Your picture brought the idea to my mind.'

"Moore worked steadily on.

"'Then I am sure to be interested.'

"'It is a very simple little narrative—a tale of the world we live in—a place so saturated with sin, that sooner or later *all* must feel its presence, and be brought into contact with evil. How can the devil be concealed for long, when the earth reeks of him—ringing from day to day with the news of murderous deeds, while temptations haunt and dog the footsteps of every human being?'

"Moore's head was bent, but he saw that his words awoke her curiosity. For he spoke ferociously, while his eyes flashed.

"'Once there lived a girl like you—young, talented, fair—her face was sweet as an angel's—her soul pure as a child's. She lived in a paradise of blissful ignorance, the world was a pleasure garden—an Eden before the fall. She was the joy of her home—a ray of sunlight—a star! The poor loved her too; she would visit them in their cottages, and comfort them in their troubles. She had sympathy for all—the kind, encouraging word—the soft, angelic smile. Such a woman was born to hold sway over lower minds—to be holy, happy, blessed! What should you think ruined that young life so full of promise, so tender and beautiful?'

"Moore looked up with a cynical little smile.

"'The usual thing,' she said, 'love.'

"The man started.

"'*You* think that, too,' he replied, as if she had re-echoed his thoughts.

"'It is the theory of the age,' she answered lightly. 'Love is out of date—played threadbare—stale.'

"'It is terrible to hear that from the young,' he said; 'but my story is quite old-fashioned—it happened years ago—when women believed in men,'

"'In the days of grandmother?'

"No, nearer than that—in the days of your mother, shall we say?'

"'Go on. Love shattered her paradise?'

"'Yes. Suddenly a spirit of darkness in the form of man cast his shadow across her path. He met her first in the green country—it was Springtime, and all the flowers were starting up through the earth, the trees were budding, and their souls were young. They would wander for hours through meadows whose sweet scent sometimes in after years came back with gall and bitterness.

"'She saw in the man all that her heart desired. He was full of strength and hope, he was handsome and daring, he took her by storm. Heaven knows he meant no harm; if Fate had willed things otherwise he would have cherished her till death. But matters turn out so differently and unexpectedly to what is wished. There are dark days as well as bright—a place of torture as well as an abode of bliss.

"'The marriage bells chimed out over hill and dale—one glorious summer morning these two were made one by the village parson. All the old folk, and the children, the young men and maidens, came out to wish them God-speed. They decorated their working carts with green boughs and wild flowers, and hung mottoes across the road. Oh! the hollow mockery of the words "Long life and happiness!" and "God bless the bride and bridegroom."

"'Even the little railway station rang with cheers as they steamed away, for she was loved, and he was respected. Men are not all bad from their youth up that afterwards sink to the lowest degradation. They may be honest, noble lads who have never told a lie. They go out into the wilderness full of bright ideals, with a sure faith in all mankind, till the dust of cities clogs their spirit, the mire from their boots reaches to the heart—bad times come.

"'The wife is tired, she wants her carriage; the babe is ill, and it cries till the heart is sore over the woes of the wretched world into which it has been brought to dwell. The wicked across the way flourish before the husband's bloodshot eyes even as a green bay tree. They fatten on their dainties.

"'There is the rich money-lender who has paupered thousands, the betting-man who has prospered on the turf, the gaily-dressed woman who has lost her fair name, and they all smile and dine and laugh. It teaches him how good it is for bodily ease and comfort to stray from the path of virtue. Forgive me, Miss Meredith, if I tire you, but this is not a sermon but a history. Remember I am telling a tale from life—every word is true.'

"'Is that so?' asked Moore, raising her finely-pencilled eyebrows and pausing a moment in her work.

"'Oh, yes. I do not care for fiction.'

"'Tell me more.'

"'It was gradual, the downward road to ruin and disgrace—a moral slope is far more dangerous than an actual precipice. It is so alluring. He fell into the hands of a false friend, one who fêted and flattered him, but by degrees drew him into cruel meshes beyond escape.

"'He made a tool of this young fellow, who was as wax in his hand. He held out the dazzling prospect of wealth and power to be obtained by the simple art of copying a signature. Oh, it is not difficult, only to turn the name upside down, and draw the words backwards.

"'He taught him to perfection, this clever man, and then persuaded the novice to do his dirty work, with the

(*Concluded on page 796.*)

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"A new preparation which bids fair to revolutionise medical science."—*Sheffield Independent.*

# The New Permanent Cure for Corpulency

## *Restores Beauty of Figure with Renewed Health, Strength, and Energy.*

### SOME PLAIN FACTS.

**The Problem Solved.** Stout persons who have for years been vainly seeking some means of *permanently* reducing weight, and who have undergone all sorts of privations in the way of restricted and disagreeable dietary, as well as exhausting physical exercises, hot baths, drugging and purging, will welcome "Antipon" as something providential; for this wonderful specific solves the problem of the radical cure of obesity once and for all.

**What "Antipon" is like.** "Antipon" is the result of a new discovery, or, rather, of a combination of discoveries. It is an entirely harmless liquid, pleasant to the palate, containing no mercury or any other mineral substance, in appearance like a light red wine, and is taken in small doses at stated times. It has no purgative effect, nor does it cause the slightest discomfort or nausea. On the contrary, it is refreshing and thirst-quenching, and an excellent tonic drink mixed with a mineral water. "Antipon" can be had of chemists, price 2s. 6d. and 4s. 6d. per bottle, from stock or on order, or, should any difficulty arise, may be obtained (on sending cash remittance) post free, under private package, direct from the sole manufacturers, the Antipon Company, 13 Buckingham Street, Strand, London, W.C.

**Its Effects on Fat Deposits.** Excessive and persistent obesity is a disease, and a dangerous one. Masses of fat form round the vital organs and interfere seriously with their naturally healthy action. "Antipon" gradually but surely destroys these unwholesome fatty deposits, dissolves them and banishes them from the system. It eliminates the root-evil, and the fat does not form again. These accumulations of fatty matter are sometimes enormous, and when "Antipon" throws them out of the system the beneficent effect upon the general health is positively magical.

**General Reductive Results.** "Antipon" is generally effective in the destruction and elimination of the subcutaneous fat that renders the personal appearance so uncomely. Not only does the waist measurement become normal, but the unnecessary fat over the entire body surface disappears: the double chin, the flabby cheeks, the bulky neck, the "podgy" limbs—all become healthily normal again, the whole body symmetrical and elegant.

**Rate of Decrease.** "Antipon," the most potent of fat absorbents, is so prompt in asserting its reductive power that there is a calculable difference in weight within a day and a night of taking the first dose—from 8 oz. to 3 lbs. in ordinary cases, as much as 4 lbs. in exceptional developments of the disease. There is thereafter a steady diurnal decrease until the attainment of proper weight and graceful proportions, when the doses should cease.

**No Change of Diet Necessary.** "Antipon" is a treatment in itself, and dispenses with drastic rules as to food and drink. Common prudence is the only auxiliary required, as every common-sense person will realise. The semi-starvation dietary prescribed by many methods is altogether opposed to the treatment of "Antipon," whose tonic effects are such that appetite is rendered keener, and a greater amount of food is required.

**Tonic Effects of "Antipon."** Not only is a healthy appetite promoted, but the whole digestive apparatus is toned up and strengthened; assimilation and nutrition are wonderfully assisted with marvellous effect upon muscle, nerve and brain. "Antipon" prevents a sluggish circulation by keeping the blood in a normal and healthy condition, so that the waste in the system is properly eliminated instead of being deposited by the blood on the tissues.

**Physicians' Approval.** The ingredients of "Antipon" having been separately investigated by several doctors, have received their warmest approval, and the opportunities they have had of testing its practical results have confirmed their opinion to the full.

**Conclusion.** Such, then, is "Antipon," the greatest of known specifics for the *permanent* cure of corpulence. A course of "Antipon" is like a draught of some elixir of life, for not only is the subject unburdened of superfluous fat, but he (or she) feels a new being, increased in strength and vitality, full of energy, and capable of enjoying the good things of life once more.

**WHAT THE PRESS SAYS ABOUT "ANTIPON."**

"'Antipon' not only speedily absorbs and throws out of the system all superabundant adipose matter, but increases strength and vitality."—*Illustrated London News.*

"'Antipon" will prove a lasting blessing to thousands."—*Lady's Realm.*

"Readers troubled with *embonpoint* will find in 'Antipon' a reliable and permanent cure, exceedingly pleasant to take, and being a powerful fat absorbent, it dissolves and eliminates from the body all superfluous adipose, both the internal fat and the subcutaneous. It also forms a strength-giving tonic, improves the appetite, assists digestion, and tones up the whole system, without the sufferer incurring any distressing restrictions as to diet, exercise, &c."—*Weldon's Lady's Journal*, May, 1903.

"'Antipon' may be counted upon to take off within the first day and night an amount of superfluous fat ranging from 8 ozs. to 3 lbs., and the reductive action continues until the desired symmetry of form and figure is reached."—*Methodist Recorder.*

"'Antipon' increases muscular strength and helps to revitalise the nervous system."—*Penny Illustrated Paper.*

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promise of much profit, assurances of safety, and no chance of detection. It was a very complicated affair; but the temptation was too strong; the bridegroom of a year and a half back fell to the level of a common defrauder.

"'Such acts seldom remain untraced; there are always bloodhounds to run the transgressor to earth; their way is indeed hard. His evil-doing was about to be brought to light, when he confessed the truth to his stricken wife, and left her to fly the country—a criminal escaping justice. Perhaps his last words to her were the hardest to bear of all: "It was for your sake, Nan; I did it for you."

"'He called her "Nan," though it was not her name. He held her in his arms for the last time; he pressed those pure lips, and whispered good-bye in the little shell-like ear, which had learnt his guilty secret in sorrow and dread.

"'Then he left her numb and petrified, to pass to an unknown land, out of her life for ever. Through a well worked-out plan, even in her feeble state of health, this loving, heart-broken woman, widowed through his crime, misled the search being made for her husband.

"'By a letter left in his handwriting—some missing garments near a rushing torrent—it was generally supposed he had destroyed himself, and his flight was never known. Shortly after this his little daughter, whom he was destined never to see or know, was born to Nan—all that she had left of that wrecked life, all that remained of her ill-fated marriage.

"'Alone and deserted, she pined and died a lingering death in the old country home.

"'The man—her husband—in distant climes, yearned for news of his dear one, whom he had so terribly wronged. Through the agency of a friend, in whom he could trust, he learnt that his punishment was fully complete—the wife he loved—was dead! crushed by the weight of suffering and shame.

"'His child had been adopted out of pity by a rich relation—he would never see her. His last hope that some day both mother and child might rejoin him, when he could make a fresh home and new start was dashed to the ground. Nothing remained but the unending torture of regret, the scathing fires of remorse! Separated from his own flesh and blood, banished from his native land, the exile lived on.'

"He paused in his narrative.

"'What became of him?' asked Moore. 'Did he go from bad to worse, or lead a life of honest toil?'

"'He lived on,' repeated the man, 'how, I am not at liberty to say. He may have done some good, some harm—all careers are mixed. He neither murdered nor stole; but he made enemies and pals, he had rises and falls, bad luck, misadventures, sickness, and sorrows.'

"'How like a true tale—nothing happens in the end after his first false step except the commonplace, ordinary routine of existence. If you had invented the story that man would have become rich and powerful, or rushed on madly down the hill to destruction, we should have seen him in every imaginable predicament. I have sometimes fancied that if it were not for my art I should have turned my attention to novel-writing. I must always be doing something, inactivity is impossible to my temperament.'

"'Suppose then,' said the man, 'that what I have told you was the foundation of a plot for a book, and I were to ask you to finish it for me—your brain is more fertile than mine. Should the father and daughter meet again in years to come, when he is old and strangely altered, while she, the very image of her dead mother, is young, proud, beautiful, what would she say to him—how view his sorry case?

"'Put yourself, Miss Meredith, in that girl's place. She has learnt, we will imagine, the history of her father's sin, and the cause of her mother's death, for the first time. He has come back to her after a life of penitence and misery to pray her to pity and forget.'

"'In a book,' replied Moore, 'I think it would make a popular ending if your heroine's heart were to melt at the sight of her father. She could swear to forgive, in touching language, that must bring tears into the eyes of the sympathetic reader. Not only does this most self-sacrificing daughter fall into his arms in the excitement of the moment, but herself solemnly declares that she will follow him to the other end of the world. There they'll dwell in fairy-like fashion and "live happily ever after." It sounds ideal, but in real life, of course, it could hardly be the case.'

"'Why not, Miss Meredith?' asked the man, leaning forward anxiously to scan her face. '*Now* we will say that the case is reality; it steps from the realms of fiction and faces us as a fact. What then? You shall be the judge!'

"'You ask my personal opinion? Well, I will give it, though you may call me harsh, unnatural, cold. But I have a keen sense of justice, and my sympathies do not go with your prodigal. I believe in everybody reaping what they sow. Either the man should suffer in silence, and never let the shadow of his crime darken the daughter's life, or die. After all, if I were writing that story, I should say the man had better die. There is really nothing else for him to do.'

"'But,' he persisted, 'if it were true, and the man lived?'

"'Then the daughter might rise up and kill him, to revenge her mother's shattered life and early death. Or better still, to save herself from hanging, give him up to justice.'

"'You really think that?' cried the man, and his voice sounded husky and harsh. 'You would relegate him to his far-off home in lonely solitude? There would be no place for him in his daughter's heart, no corner for his loveless soul? Judging by yourself, it would be wiser that he should stay away and never seek her out. A sad ending truly to the story—a *just* ending!'

"He laughed bitterly, but his eyes were moist with unshed tears. Moore was busily putting the last touches to her work, she did not see his pained expression.

"'There!' she exclaimed at last, with a sigh of satisfaction. 'It is finished. Come and look. I am satisfied. Is that very conceited?'

"'It is saying a great deal,' he replied stonily, as he rose and went to her side.

"He hardly glanced at the striking portrait of himself, his gaze was fixed steadfastly on the face of the girl in the picture.

"'Who is that?' he asked, under his breath.

"'I took it from an old miniature of my mother. She is beautiful, indeed.'

"'Have you done with me?' he asked coldly.

"'Quite, thank you.'

"'It is ended, like my story.'

"'Yes; and if ever you write that idea as a book, don't let the old ruffian return and impose on his daughter. It would be far more artistic for him to die. I like a sad conclusion.'

"He bit his lip and moved away.

"'I hope,' she said, 'you will come and sit for me again some day.'

"'No,' he answered sadly. 'I am going away abroad, to-morrow, perhaps.'

"'I am most grateful for your services, but your sitting was arranged in such a hurry, we did not settle about terms. Please accept this.'

"Moore pressed some gold into his hand, and opened the door for him to pass out.

"He faced her with flashing eyes, and spoke contemptuously:

"'I don't want your money, not a farthing of it.'

"He flung the coins fiercely at her feet, and with a satirical laugh that sounded like a sob, rushed from the house, muttering bitter words.

"She gazed at him in speechless surprise, and turned to her picture.

"There it stood, the portrait she had unconsciously painted of her father, whom she believed dead—the mother's face at his side, vividly portrayed by the daughter's hand.

"'The only thing for him to do was to die!'—Moore had said it—and the words resounded in his ears like a death knell, when he went as he came—a stranger and unknown!"

(*Next week: "Mrs. Lyndsey's Daughter."*)

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## Colds in the Head a Cause of Catarrh.

The medical explanation of the causes and symptoms of catarrh is an interesting item of a quarterly medical Journal just at hand. The Editor is anxious that people should understand the serious consequences which may result from neglect of a cold or of a series of colds in the head. In fact, the beginning of many of the most obstinate forms of catarrh can be traced to what the patient thought a simple cold. This fact is emphasised by a series of cases taken from the records of the Drouet Institute. These cases also serve to illustrate the treatment of catarrh by the Drouet Method, which the Editor points out has been successful in a large proportion of instances after operations and other special procedures have failed. Names and addresses being given, this issue of the "Review of Ear, Nose, and Throat Diseases" will be of use to everyone who has any form of catarrh. A free copy of the "Review" can be obtained by addressing the Secretary, Drouet Institute, 10, Marble Arch, London, W. The "Review" also contains a Special Report Form by means of which anyone can obtain free advice as to treatment. The Editor advises patients, however, when possible, to visit the Drouet Institute, for a personal consultation with the medical staff. Consulting hours are—in the morning, 10 to 12, and in the afternoon, 2 to 4, week days only. A fee of five shillings is charged for personal consultations.


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## TO CURE SICK HEADACHE.

Sick headache means an overtaxed stomach and a derangement of the digestive organs.

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have proved themselves a boon for removing that distressed feeling and discomfort. A dose will remove the immediate cause, and if repeated for a few days will enable your system to work normally.

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### Woman's Fault.

THE MAID: "Whose fault is it if women lead aimless existences?" The Man: "Woman's, of course. They ought to practise throwing."

### No Chance for Him.

HE: "So you don't know that if I might linger by you for ever I should be another man?" She: "Well, it will be another man that does linger there."

### Precisely!

"JUST by way of a hint, you know, I told her she looked sweet enough to kiss." "Well?" "Well, she said that was the way she intended to look." "And so——" "Precisely."

### A Sensible Girl.

HE (timidly): "Now that we are engaged, I—I presume I may—may kiss you as much as I please, mayn't I?" She (encouragingly): "Yes, indeed. Make the most of your time, dear. There's no telling how long an engagement will last nowadays, you know."

### Equal to the Occasion.

MR. SHODDY: "Yas, that's the armah used by my ancestah who came ovah with the Conquerah." Young Lady (after examining the armour carefully): "It says 'Made in Germany' on the gauntlet." Mr. Shoddy: "Oh, yes. My ancestah—er—*started* from there, don't yer know."

### What Papa Said.

MR. SLIMPURSE: "Wha-what did your pa say when you told him we were engaged to be married?" Miss Beauty: "He was awfully kind. He said if you would call for him to-morrow with a brougham—I think he said your brougham—he would go with you to look at the Bayswater mansion you think of buying for me to live in."

### Dangerous Ground.

HE: "Jolly conservatory, Miss Matchems, isn't it?" She: "Yes; quite renowned for the number of proposals that have been made here——" He: "H'm—yes. By-the-bye, they're beginning to waltz." She: "It was here that Charlie Gudgeon proposed to Miss Pyke. They were sitting here, just as we are now, and he said, quite abruptly, just as you might say to me, 'Will you be mine?' and she said, as I might say to you——" He: "Ah, yes—quite so; but hadn't we better have a spin round?"

### Poor Miss Clara!

THE YOUNG RECTOR (in evident embarrassment): "My dear Miss Clara, I"—trying to leave his chair—"I believe I have formed an—attachment, and——" Miss Clara (blushing furiously): "Oh, Arthur—I mean Mr. Greene—this is so unexpected. I must——" The Young Rector (frantically): "I Beg pardon, Miss Clara; but I was about to say I have formed an attachment for this chair, due to the presence of a bit of cobbler's wax placed here by that unregenerate brother of yours." (Intense delight of the small boy in ambush.)

### She'd Stolen his Property.

"SIR, you have been following me for an hour!" "Quite natural, miss. You've stolen my heart!"

### Couldn't Marry More.

SHE: "Ada has married one man out of a thousand." He: "Well, how many did you expect her to marry; two or three?"

### Didn't Like a Coolness.

HE: "Why do you flutter that fan continuously?" She: "Do you object?" He: "I object to anything that could produce a coldness between us."

### Sure Signs of Industry.

"CLAUDIA, is the young man industrious to whom you are engaged?" "Industrious? Why, papa, he intended to propose to me a month ago, but was too busy."

### Just the Man!

THE HEIRESS: "The man I marry must be very handsome, afraid of nothing, and clever. Money's no object to me." Mr. Broke: "Doesn't it seem like fate that we should have met?"

### The Sound was Similar.

WHEN a certain Liverpool young lady parts from her young man, who is too bashful to understand the nicer usages of his position, she says: "William, if you were to kiss me, you might be afraid ma would hear it; but if I creak the gate, she won't know the difference."

### Spoilt the Compliment.

THE PROFESSOR: "I declare, Mrs. Blombard, you look as young as your daughter." Mrs. Blombard (much flattered): "Do you really think so, professor?" The Professor: "Yes, indeed. No one would ever believe there was such an extraordinary difference in your ages."

### She Wasn't Asleep.

HE had come upon her dozing on a sofa, and when she woke up, she accused him of stealing a kiss. "Well," he said, "I will admit that the temptation was too great to be resisted. I did steal one little kiss." "One!" she exclaimed indignantly; "I counted eight before I woke up."

### Old Beaux Were No Use.

"YOU are an iceberg!" exclaimed her elderly but well-preserved adorer, pale with anger and mortification. "A dozen Cupids, with a hundred arrows each, could never find a vulnerable place in your heart!" "Not if they used an old beau to shoot with, Mr. Wellup," coldly replied the young and beautiful Miss Flyppe.

### Silence was Safer.

"WHAT if I were one of those husbands, my dear, who get up cross in the morning, and bang things about and kick everything over just because the coffee is cold?" "John," responded his wife, "I would make it hot for you." As her words admitted of more than one interpretation, John said nothing about the coffee.

### Double Pressure.

MR. PENDRAGON weighs eighteen stone. He called on Miss Flyrte the other evening. "Oh, Mr. Pendragon," she said, "I am so glad to see you. Would you mind sitting in this big chair? I put a portfolio of seaweeds underneath the cushion yesterday." And later in the evening Mr. Pendragon suggested that she should help him press them.

### Not the Only Reason for Moving It.

"DARLING," said the young man, as he tenderly raised the lovely head from the place where it had rested an hour or more, got up, sat down again on the other side of the beautiful maiden, and once more drew the golden curls to his bosom, "you have no objection to a slight change of position, have you?" "No, Alfred," she murmured softly, "your heart is on this side." "Yes, my angel," responded the young man, his voice trembling with deep feeling, "and my waistcoat will now get worn alike on both sides."

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# IN CONFIDENCE

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

*[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.*]*

## An Unwise Trick.

"I MEET a man every day in the street," writes "DAISY," "and have taken such a fancy to him. He looks as though he feels the same towards me. How can I get to know him? Should I drop something in the street, and let him pick it up, or how?"

* * * * *

I would not do anything forward which you might afterwards regret. Perhaps he has set you rather on a pedestal, and would be shocked to think that you would have recourse to an obvious trick. I should wait until something happens which will really bring you together. If he is as keen on knowing you as you are on making his acquaintance, depend on it he will sooner or later find his way to do so becomingly.

❦❦❦

## A Lonely Man.

"How is a man to get to know girls?" asks "LONELY." "I live by myself in lodgings, but can never meet any nice girls—that is, of the kind a fellow likes to know. There are plenty of the other sort. Meanwhile, I am growing to feel lonely, and fear that very soon I shall be too old to attract the girls."

* * * * *

It must be in a measure your own fault, "LONELY," that you have drifted so apart from the other sex. Surely you have men friends who have sisters and cousins, and if they know you well, they ought not to fear introducing you. Why not try asking them? Failing that, join a church choir, musical or amateur dramatic society, tennis club, or some other institution where men and women meet socially. To meet the "right sort of girl" you must go to places where you are likely to find her, and must be able to attract her by some social qualities when you do meet her.

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## Shipboard Acquaintances.

"R. T." recently returned from a sea voyage. While on the ship he made the acquaintance of a married lady and her daughter, with whom he got very friendly. When they reached port, the ladies bade him farewell, and expressed pleasure at having met him, but said nothing as to his calling on them or continuing the acquaintance. As he got very friendly with the girl, should he take some steps to resume their acquaintance?

* * * * *

Of course you know that shipboard acquaintances are not necessarily life-long friends. To relieve the tedium of a voyage, people often become too intimate with their fellow passengers. But it does not follow that on getting ashore things are to continue on the same footing. If the married lady and her daughter had really taken a great fancy to you, they would certainly have given you an invitation to call on them, and the address and time at which such a call would be expected. Not having done so, you must take it that they did not regard you as other than a temporary acquaintance.

## Should Husbands Play Cricket?

"GERTY" was married at Christmas. Until last month, her husband was scarcely ever away from her, and very rarely saw his male friends. Now that the summer has come, however, he often goes cycling or cricketing with them in the evenings or on Saturday afternoons, and leaves his wife at home. Do I think this is right? "GERTY" has not yet complained about it, but thinks she has a grievance.

* * * * *

Well, I don't think he ought to give up all his Saturday afternoons to his men friends, while he has a young wife who would like an outing as well as he does himself. If he goes cycling, or walking, he ought to arrange for you to be his companion. As to occasionally cricketing or cycling in the evenings, well, I don't think you ought to grudge him a few hours' necessary recreation in the summer, provided he does not carry it to the extent of leaving you alone too often.

* * * * *

A man ought not to entirely neglect his old "pals," and a little of their society ought to rather benefit your married happiness by making him feel that he is still a free agent. Have you not a few girl friends whom you could visit or go shopping with while your husband is on one of his outings?

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## A Rejected Man's Woes.

"I WAS very friendly with a girl," writes "F. T.," "and we used to go out together a lot. Then she went away for a holiday in the country. There had been a slight coolness between us before that, but I put it down to ill-health on her part. Now she has returned, and when I met her in the street the other day she cut me dead. I have since seen her about with another man, and she never looks at me. One day, I got so madly jealous that I stopped her while with him, and tried to speak to her. To my surprise, the man turned round, and said that if I dared interfere with the girl he would knock me down. How can you account for her amazing conduct?"

* * * * *

I think she has treated you very badly indeed, but for your sake think matters may be for the best. Evidently the girl took a dislike to you as a result of the "coolness," and while on her holiday met a man with whom she fell in love. When she saw you, she was probably afraid to meet you and tell the truth, so thought it better to cut you outright. It was harsh, but perhaps she preferred that way to deception. You should not have tried to speak to her against her will, while with another man. It was undignified. Always avoid scenes in public. They are rarely forgiven.

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## The Boarding-House Young Man.

"ELSIE" is receiving attentions from a young man in a boarding-house. He is something in the City, and has travelled a great deal. Should she encourage him?

* * * * *

You ask my advice in strict confidence about the young man. Don't think me unkind if I am quite candid about him, but I don't quite like your description. I may be wrong, but I seem to know that young man. He is a very regular frequenter of the boarding-house of the kind at which you are staying. He has generally travelled a lot, talks delightfully, knows how to pay a compliment, is free with his money when out with you, and is—something in the City.

* * * * *

He may be thoroughly genuine, but I think the majority of young men of the cosmopolitan order are seldom matrimonially inclined, and carry on such flirtations with every pretty girl they meet. Further, just get your brother or somebody you know to make a few inquiries about his position in the City before you let him squeeze your hand again, and get to know something about his family antecedents before you next turn those pleading grey eyes upwards to his in a glance of half affection, half doubt.

*Cynthia*

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